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EDITOR'S WELCOME

"The saga continues..."

—*Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*,
tagline, 1980

George Lucas has stated that the *Star Wars* saga has a poetic structure. Its motifs, themes, and ideas reflect and repeat, much like a poem. As true as this is of the narrative journey of both Anakin and Luke Skywalker, it's also true of the *Star Wars* experience outside of the movies. How else can you explain the way that history has repeated itself and how *Star Wars* is—like it was in 1977 to 1983 and 1999 to 2005—everywhere!

On the way to work I hear people chattering about *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *Star Wars* T-shirts are everywhere (despite it being the height of Winter), and Daisy Ridley's strong, determined face seems to be on the side of every bus!

The greatest part of this is that *Star Wars* is very much here to stay. In less than a year, *Rogue One* hits our screens, and shortly after that we'll see the next part of the saga as Rey, Finn, Poe, and, of course, Luke return for Episode VIII. As a certain gold protocol droid might say, "Oh my!"

Jonathan Wilkins,
Editor

May the Force be with you...Always.



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STAR WARS

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

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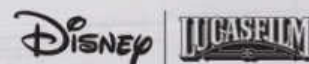
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LAUNCH PAD

ALL THE COOL NEWS FROM THE *STAR WARS* UNIVERSE



FACING THE PRESS!

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STAR WARS: *THE FORCE AWAKENS* GLOBAL PRESS CONFERENCE

by Amy Ratcliffe



As I write this, the Force is still sleeping. It won't wake up for another week, and eager fans are soaking up every new tidbit from the film's cast and crew about *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. On December 6, director J.J. Abrams was joined by Lawrence Kasdan, Kathleen Kennedy, Daisy Ridley, Adam Driver, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, Gwendoline Christie, Lupita Nyong'o, Carrie Fisher, and Harrison Ford at a global press conference moderated by Mindy Kaling, and they delivered tidbits aplenty. Kaling joked that she's not necessarily well known for being a huge *Star Wars* fan, but she is part of our fandom and she's also a friend of Abrams. She brought her own offbeat questions to the table and took queries from the audience of journalists in attendance. Though we'll have a full report in our next issue, we couldn't wait to share some highlights from the event. From Carrie Fisher's comments on petitioning to get her dog, Gary, a role in the movie, to Abrams' insight on accepting the monumental task of directing the first new *Star Wars* movie in 10 years, the question and answer session was lively and peppered with laughter. Isaac, Boyega, and Christie even took a moment to perform a brief but rousing a *cappella* version of Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir." Christie chose the rock tune as Captain Phasma's entrance song. Naturally. The impromptu vocal jam session was certainly one of the most entertaining moments of the press conference, but there were more informative answers, too. Here are some of the insights we learned:

IT WAS MORE THAN A JOB

Abrams feels fortunate to be a part of this project. Kaling asked him why he took the job because, as she pointedly asked, "Aren't you rich?" He answered, "This is a project that I felt incredibly lucky to be asked to be part of. The process of this movie, to a person on the crew, to a person on the cast, was that this was not a job. It was nothing that any one of us took on because it was a gig that was available. It was something that felt like a true passion and something that every single person brought much more to than any of us could have expected, so I do, honestly, feel honored to be a part of it."

THEY'RE WORKING TOGETHER ON FUTURE FILMS

With Episode VII complete, it's time to turn attention toward the next installments of the sequel trilogy. Kennedy said they're looking forward together. "We haven't mapped out every single detail yet, but



obviously everybody is talking to one another and working together and that collaboration, I think, is what is going to guarantee that everybody has a say in how we move forward with this," she said. "J.J. and Rian [Johnson] have already talked at length because Rian is about to start shooting Episode VIII. Then Colin [Trevorrow] will start working with Rian and spend a lot of time on the set with him."

BUILDING BACKSTORIES HAS BEEN A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The Force Awakens is introducing new characters to the saga and developing the histories for those characters has been synergistic. Christie said she was heartened by the "genuine creative experience" of working with Abrams on who Pasma was. Isaac said the collaboration with Abrams and Lucasfilm, "has been one of the coolest things" about working on the film. He said it was like playing in a sandbox together. He cited a particular example: "I was talking about where Poe could have been from. The thing is, at the end

of *A New Hope*, at the medal ceremony, one of Guatemala's claims to fame is that that last shot, where the ships are leaving and you see the temples, was shot in Guatemala. Then for me, the fact that I was born there and that's a rebel base, and I'm playing a Resistance fighter, a rebel fighter, I thought, *Maybe Poe was there. That's where he's from.* And then this comic book comes out, called *Shattered Empire*, where Poe's parents ended up going to Yavin 4 and making sweet love. That probably marks the first time the phrase 'making sweet love'



has been used in a *Star Wars* press conference.”

KYLO REN DOESN'T OWN A DAY PLANNER

The dark side followers we've met so far in the *Star Wars* universe tend to be an organized group with militaristic sensibilities. That's not the case with Kylo Ren. After teasing about the villain being a great cook and a Scorpio, Driver opened up about the character. “I think he's very unpolished and unfinished, and I think what J.J. and Larry did [was keep]

all the vocabulary that everyone is familiar with in *Star Wars* and the dark side but [while] also adding a kind of recklessness or something that's untidy about it. I think people normally associate the dark side with being organized and in control and calm and in command,” Driver said.

Abrams said Kasdan wanted to do something that “felt a little bit different” with Kylo Ren. “There's never been a character like Kylo in the saga,” Kasdan said, “He hasn't got [it] together.”

THEY WERE INSPIRED BY THE PAST

John Boyega looked at Ford and Mark Hamill's audition tapes on YouTube to help tap into the right “*Star Wars*-esque energy,” Christie was taken with Princess Leia. “I was about six when I saw the film,” she said.

“I remember being so struck by the character of Princess Leia and thinking even then, in my child mind, *This seems different than the other women I see in films*, and feeling very inspired by that. And inspired by a woman with such tenacity, and being so strong-minded.”

REVIEWS

We'll be hearing your thoughts on *The Force Awakens* next issue, but here's what the critics said!

"This is a classic. A humongous piece of cinema."

—*The Times*

"Boy, has the Force awoken... A triumph of escapism and the most exhilarating film yet in this mighty franchise."

— *The Daily Mail*

"All I can say is *The Force Awakens* evokes magical memories of 1977's *Star Wars* Episode IV: *A New Hope*, with plenty of humour, action, drama, and heart."

—*The Daily Mirror*

"Exciting and brimming with energy and its own kind of generosity."

—*The Guardian*

"The Force is back. Big time. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* pumps new energy and life into a hallowed franchise in a way that both resurrects old pleasures and points in promising new directions."

—*The Hollywood Reporter*

"It seamlessly balances cosy favorites and new kinetic wows."

—*The New York Times*



BRITISH PM PRAISES *STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS*

MP Oliver Dowd, whose UK constituency includes Elstree, home to the production of the original *Star Wars* movie in 1977, asked David Cameron to pledge support just as the movie reached cinemas.

The Prime Minister said, "This is not only very exciting for children, and I have to say, quite a lot of parents who are looking forward to this film, but this is a film being made in Britain, with many British actors, with some brilliant British technicians showing the strength of the British film industry. And I would say this, but also, backed by the British government and British taxpayers, with the excellent resources that we provide. And let me just say, to my honorable friend, as I've worked with him for so many years, in so many different ways, I know that he will never join the dark side!"





HAND OVER YOUR CREDITS!

Some *Star Wars* fans might be able to compete against Jabba the Hutt when it comes to offering rewards to bounty hunters. The Nielsen research firm recently delivered on the spending habits of fans. They report *Star Wars* fans are 9% more likely than the average American to be part of households with \$70,000 or more in annual income, and that they spend more than the average moviegoer across the combined product categories of personal care, food, auto, and technology. In more precise numbers, fans spend \$4,300 vs. \$4,100 each year for non-fans. Marketing partnerships for *The Force Awakens* fit right into those categories with product tie-ins such as Cover Girl cosmetics, snacks from Popchips and Kraft, and Chrysler car commercials. Advertising ran the gamut and was aimed at different age ranges.

Given the reach of *Star Wars* and the fact that it's been part of pop culture and merchandising for almost 40 years, it's perhaps not too surprising to find out that, statistically speaking, *Star Wars* has a wide reach. It connects with a variety of demographics. Graham Gee, general manager for home entertainment at Nielsen, said, "The size of the fanhood is so large that I wouldn't say there are demographics with no fans." In other words, no particular group is immune.

Gee commented on how some of the brands leaned into that by going bigger rather than narrowing their focus. "It's not surprising that you see products geared toward families," he said. Learning how effective the techniques and partnerships have been isn't an overnight evaluation. Nielsen has studying to do in the months ahead to grasp the impact and reach of various campaigns. One area in which *Star Wars* fans have been spending money? On the existing films. Sales have spiked on the digital front in the months leading into *The Force Awakens*. Amazon reports large increases in sales of the *Star Wars* saga digital bundle through Amazon Video. The first six films were released digitally in April 2015. The week tickets went on sale for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (on October 20) saw a 300% increase in sales over the week prior. By November 29, there was a more than 400% increase in sales of the digital bundle compared to the week before *The Force Awakens* tickets were available. The numbers reached even higher over Thanksgiving weekend. Amazon also reports seeing peaks across *Star Wars* merchandise, particularly LEGO play sets.



AN EARLY TRIP TO JAKKU

Technology has advanced significantly since the early 2000s, and that means promotion for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* hasn't been like anything we'd seen before. If the push into various corners of the marketplace was impressive for *The Phantom Menace*, it was most impressive with Episode VII. Google played a role in one of the unique endeavors with Google Cardboard. Google Cardboard is a low-cost, but effective virtual reality platform. Like the name implies, it does involve cardboard; It's a fold-out mount with focal length lenses that fits over a mobile phone. Paired with third party apps, Google Cardboard works as a device that can take you to other worlds or galaxies. Lucasfilm's ILMxLAB studio and the Story Group worked with Google and Verizon to transport users to Jakku using Google Cardboard.

The sets were available in patterns for BB-8, R2-D2, Kylo Ren, or First Order Stormtrooper and were given away by Verizon and Google Store. Once set-up was complete (a simple process that took mere minutes), Google Cardboard worked with the *Star Wars* app to deliver Jakku Spy in the weeks before the arrival of the film. Though the technology is outwardly reminiscent of retro View Master toys, it's much more sophisticated. The system brought users into *The Force Awakens* with sights and sounds from the film, including messages from BB-8. ILMxLAB used a mix of techniques to execute the project in a convincing format; they blended digital images with photography and included real characters and sets from the film.

The 360-degree range of vision made the experience immersive and allowed fans to step foot on Jakku before *The Force Awakens* even hit theaters. They became part of the story, and it was as easy as looking through fancy cardboard. If they can go this far now, imagine what they'll be able to do by the time Episode VIII is here!

INSIDER LOVES

ALL THE COOL STUFF WE'VE SEEN SINCE LAST ISSUE!

PACK TO THE FUTURE!

A new *Star Wars* film would not be complete without a new set of cards from TOPPS and their first card series from *The Force Awakens* does not disappoint. Along with the usual character cards we get a plethora of stills from the film along with behind-the-scenes images, concepts, sketch cards, rare first time autographs, and First Order stormtrooper costume pieces too! Series 1 of *The Force Awakens* Trading Cards consists of 100 base cards and over 100 insert cards.



Don't miss the set of high end plastic cards depicting images from both the prequel and original trilogies. This high end set features lots of numbered parallels and patterns to chase. *Star Wars High Tek Collector Cards* also feature on-card autographs from over 60 signers, including 6 first-time signers.



The popular *Star Wars Galactic Connexions* gets a second series. Consisting of 75 characters and vehicles, as well as an all-new lightsaber purple disc, the *Galactic Connexions* are available exclusively now at Walmart and Walmart.com



THE COLD SIDE OF THE FORCE!

Even though it's still winter, we love the amazing *Star Wars Lightsaber Lollies* in vibrant sweet strawberry red or a zingy lemon & lime green. They are really worth fighting over, but even better to eat so be sure you stock up when you visit your local supermarket!



DISNEY INFINITY 3.0 EXPANDS

The arrival of a new *Star Wars* film wasn't the only exciting aspect about *The Force Awakens*. With the movie finally in theaters and the story out in the world, products tied to the plot were released—products like Disney Infinity 3.0's *The Force Awakens* playset and figures. The latest version of the game was released in August and added the *Star Wars* universe to the interactive platform. Characters such as Luke Skywalker, Ahsoka Tano, Darth Vader, and Yoda were made available so players could hop across all eras of the *Star Wars* universe. And with the new film, Finn, Rey, Poe Dameron, and Kylo Ren have joined the fray.

Disney set up a preview of the characters prior to the release at a press conference for *The Force Awakens*, and though they showed off Rey's abilities, Kylo Ren was off limits. They were worried seeing him in action would spoil aspects of the film. The curtain of secrecy didn't stop John Boyega from talking about reprising his roles for the game though. Boyega explained how he got to revisit the role of Finn twice, once for the Star Tours attraction at Disney Parks and once for Disney Infinity 3.0. He was exuberant when discussing his involvement with Infinity. "It's been fun to be a playable character. I get to play with myself. [Laughs] It's been amazing. The characters in Disney Infinity are more childlike versions of the characters in the movie so that was very cool." He paused to demonstrate a line from the game: "I'm Finn, and I'm in charge now."



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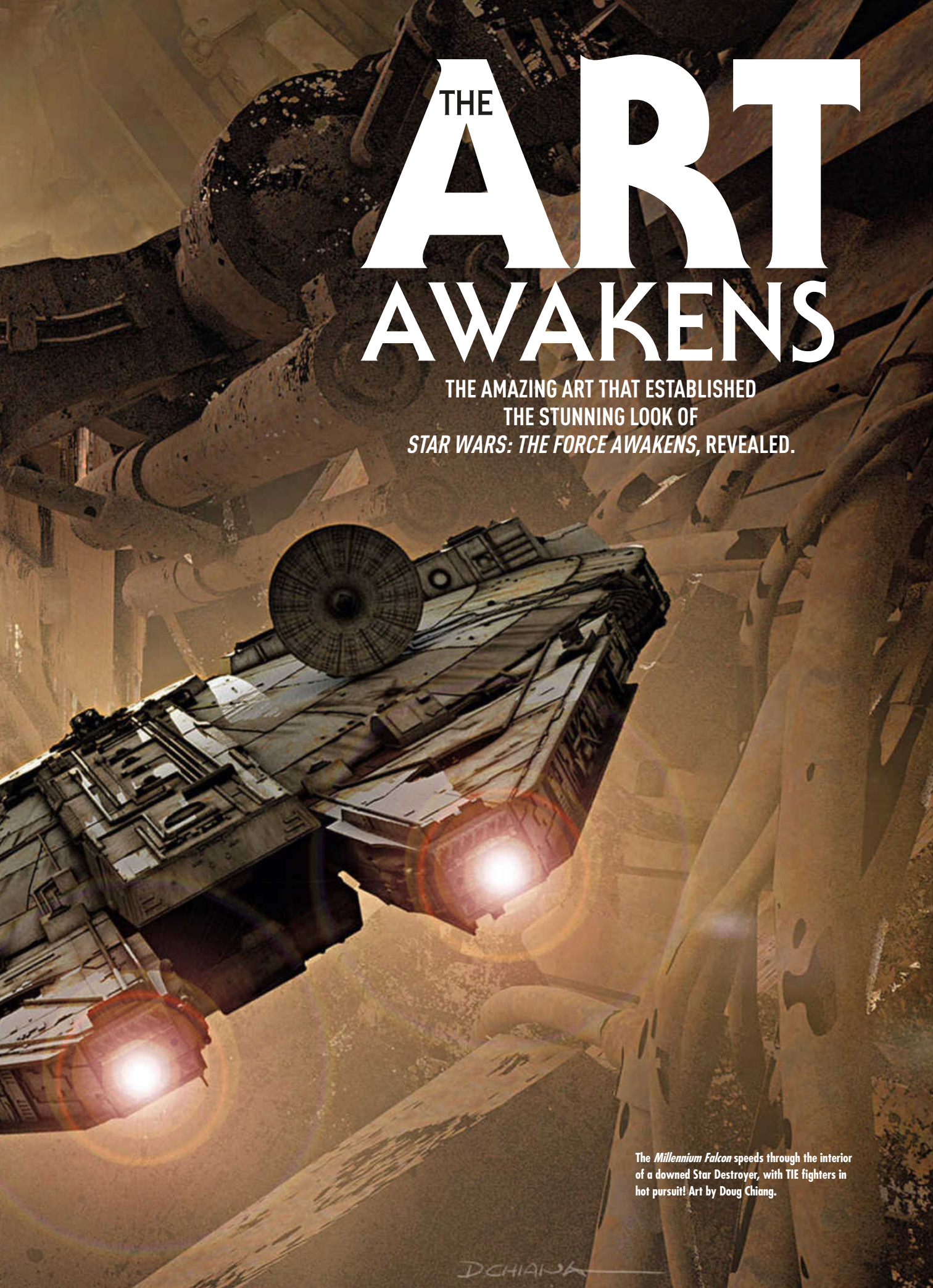
propstore.com



THE



Abrams' *The Art of Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is available now!

The background of the entire page is a detailed, painterly illustration by Doug Chiang. It depicts the Millennium Falcon, a small, boxy spacecraft, flying through the massive, rusted, and industrial interior of a Star Destroyer. The Falcon is angled upwards, with its engines glowing red and white. The surrounding environment is filled with large, curved metal structures, pipes, and debris, creating a sense of scale and danger. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, emphasizing the metallic textures and the chaotic environment.

THE ART AWAKENS

THE AMAZING ART THAT ESTABLISHED
THE STUNNING LOOK OF
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS, REVEALED.

The *Millennium Falcon* speeds through the interior of a downed Star Destroyer, with TIE fighters in hot pursuit! Art by Doug Chiang.

DCHIANG



Resistance pilot helmets. Art by Glyn Dillon.

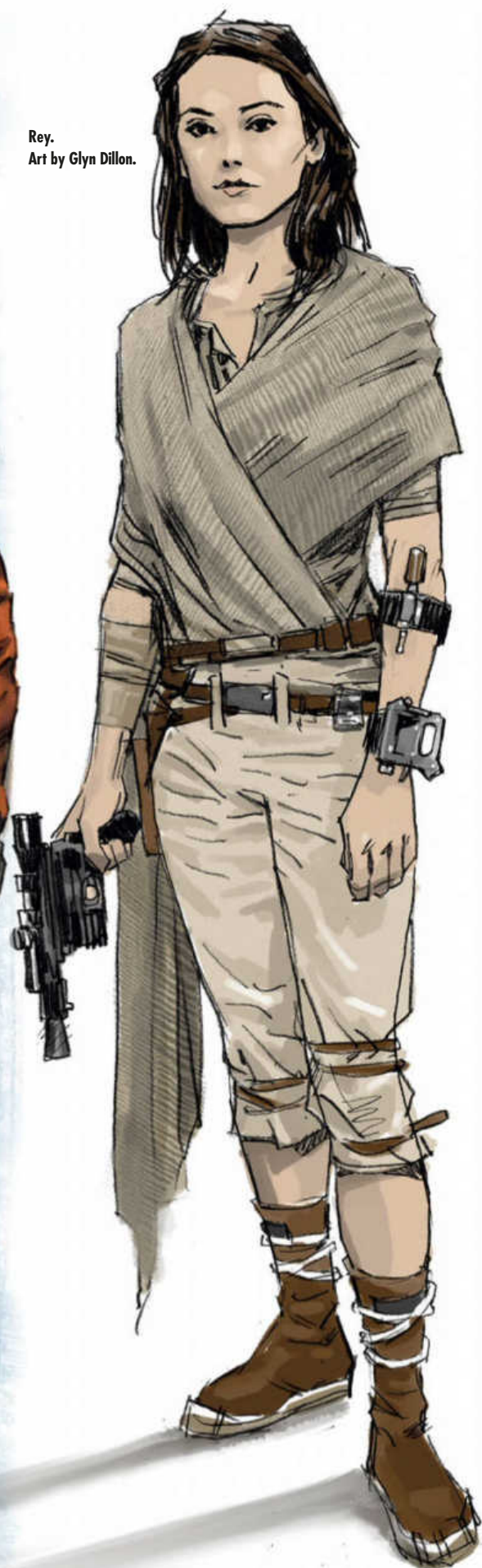


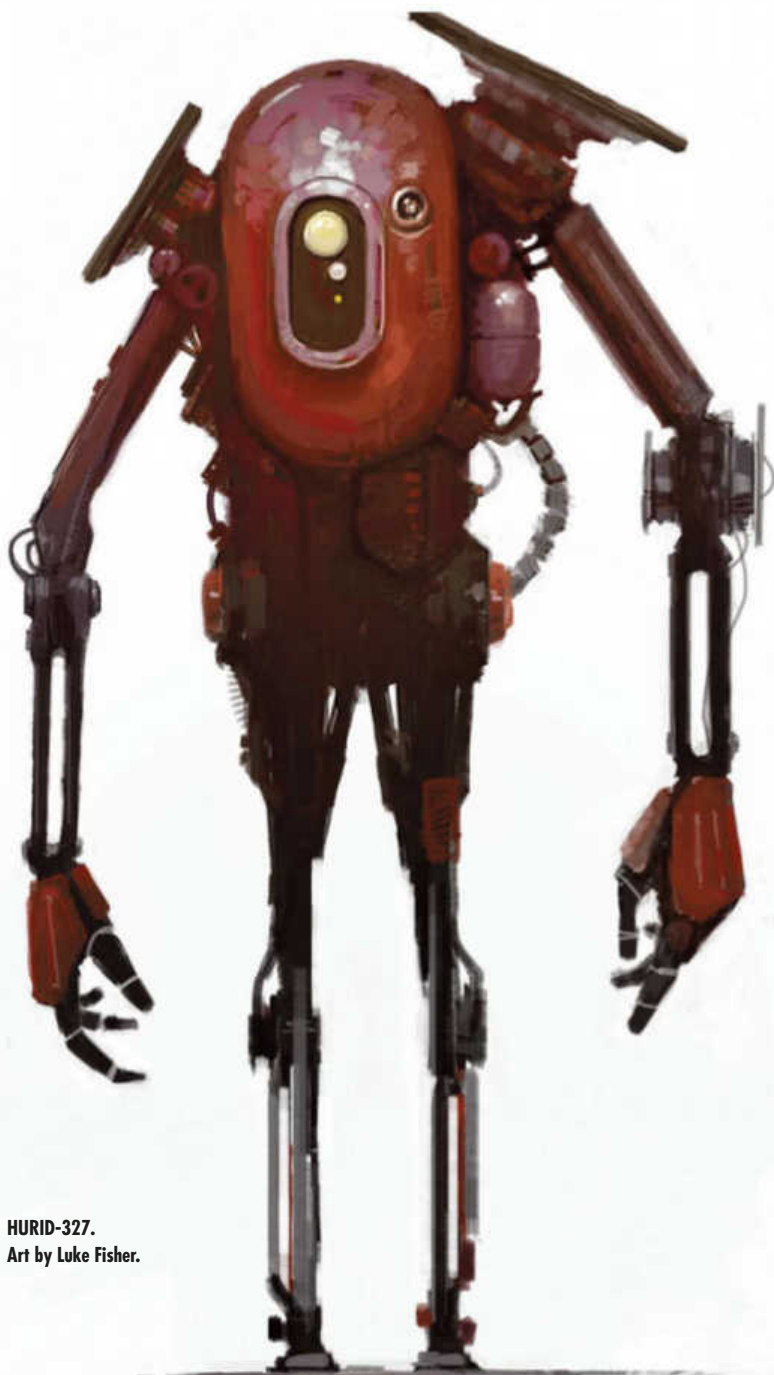
The Resistance arrives! Art by James Clyne.



Poe Dameron.
Art by Glyn Dillon.

Rey.
Art by Glyn Dillon.





HURID-327.
Art by Luke Fisher.



Rey and her speeder.
Art by Yanick Dusseault
and Iain McCaig.



Captain Phasma.
Art by Dermot Power.





An early iteration of
a First Order stormtrooper.
Art by Christian Alzmann.



Finn.
Art by Glyn Dillon.

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**52 Week Nielsen ScanTrack Data ending 6/27/2015. Leading brand's Complete Multivitamin gummies contain 3 grams of sugar per 2 gummies.

¹Based on survey of pediatricians who discuss children's supplements with their patients' parents and prefer to recommend Star Wars Complete formula vs. comparable leading brands. All are Pediatrician Preferred except Immune Support Complex.

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THE TALE OF BUILDING THE ROYAL STARSHIP

HASBRO'S VERSION OF QUEEN AMIDALA'S SLEEK STARSHIP BOASTS AN INNOVATIVE STORY BEHIND ITS CREATION.

At over three feet long, the Naboo Royal Starship was the largest new ship Hasbro had done since the original movies and it was packed with features. Two panels open to expose the interior of the ship and a boarding ramp slides out. The main cockpit has a throne for the Queen and four cockpit chairs as well as a captain's console.

Four buttons on the back of the ship cause it to emit several different sounds, such as an R2 unit beep, laser and battle

sounds, and a hyperdrive spinning up. The hyperdrive block is two sided, with one side being damaged. Putting the hyperdrive in its slot one way or the other causes different sounds to be played. A small elevator enables droids to move between three different levels. The nose cone has a secret compartment that hides an escape pod that can hold one figure and an astromech droid.

But the coolest feature is the infrared sensors on the back of the ship. With the

included Federation droid fighter, which is mounted on a handle to allow a child to fly it around, you can shoot the Queen's ship with a laser. When struck in the right place (think Laser Tag here), the ship will emit some battle sounds and a back panel blows off the ship, throwing any droid mounted there into space.



**HASBRO USED THE 3D
PRINTING PROCESS ON
TOYS FOR *THE PHANTOM
MENACE*, INCLUDING
THE QUEEN'S ROYAL
STARSHIP.**

A toy this complicated was difficult to engineer. But in the late 90s, when the Queen's Ship was being developed, new tools were coming online in the industry to help the engineers and designers.

Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) had been around for a while, but 3D CAD, in which designers build virtual 3D models, was just taking hold. In addition, this virtual model building begged for technologies like 3D printing in order for the designers to turn their screen model into a real-world object.

Three-D printing is a buzz word we hear a lot about today, mostly due to prices dropping to the point where it's now feasible for someone to buy a

printer for their home, but the technology has been around since the 80s. The process has completely changed the toy industry. While no vintage toys were ever developed using 3D printing, Hasbro did use the process on toys for *The Phantom Menace*, including the Naboo Royal Starship. But before we get into how it aided the Hasbro designers, let's take a look at the history of 3D printing.

First, what 3D printing isn't; it isn't like a *Star Trek* replicator where you put in a design and out pops a product. The

3D printer technology of today can make parts out of only one material. So, building a plastic toy is within their ability, but spitting out anything complicated, like a Smartphone, for example, is well beyond the technology for now. Also, 3D printing is a very slow process.

A plastic toy being made in a production molding facility would spit out a part every few seconds. A similar part made with a 3D printer might well take an hour, or several hours, to print.

There are many types of printing, but the earliest one developed was known as Stereolithography or SLA. It worked by using a photopolymer, which is a material that is liquid until struck with a laser that cures it into a hard plastic. The machines have a large vat of liquid with a tray inside that can move up and down. A laser is mounted to a head that can move

Below, left to right:
A typical SLA machine;
an FDM machine
at work.

**Opposite page, from
below left:** Prototypes
of the Queen's throne,
some hyperdrives, and
a wall section of the
ship; four prototypes
of the escape pod.

horizontally and is controlled by a computer. The tray moves to a position where just a thin layer of the liquid covers its surface. The laser then traces one layer of the part to be built, hardening the liquid into a solid. The tray then moves down allowing another thin layer of liquid to flow over the newly hardened plastic. The laser traces the next layer and the process repeats with layer after layer being built until the part is finished.

A second popular type of 3D printing is called Fused Deposition Modeling or FDM. This is typical of the home systems that are on the market today, such as the MakerBot. It works similarly to SLA with a tray moving vertically as the machine builds up layer upon layer of material. Rather than a liquid material, the FDM

3D PRINTING PROCESSES HAVE CHANGED THE TOY INDUSTRY.

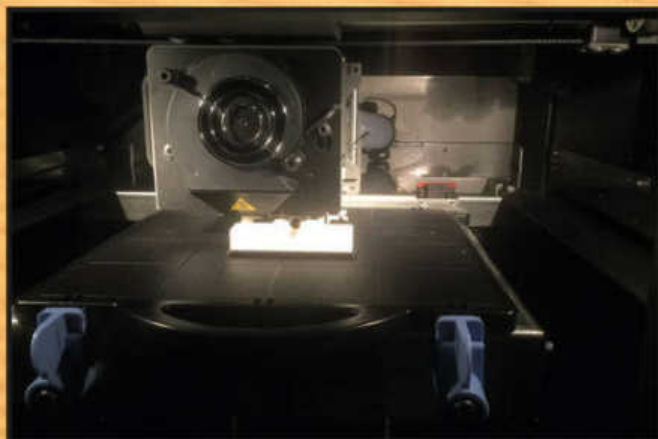
works more like an ink-jet printer with a nozzle that heats up a plastic and ejects it onto the building part.

There are a few other types of 3D printing, some of which use a powered base where the material is heated in a process called sintering. These types of machines can even create parts out of metal.

Three-D printing processes have changed the toy industry by allowing engineers and designers to make quick samples right from their computer files. In the past, this process would have been

very time consuming and involve craftsmen making parts out of wood, plastic sheets or out of wax or clay. With 3D printing, the parts come out precast and many iterations can be created during the design process. The Queen's Ship for Episode I is a good example of 3D printing being used to make a *Star Wars* toy.

Four prototypes of the escape pod can be seen on the right. On the left, is a part as it would come directly off the SLA machine. These parts usually have a yellow tint. The other three





are painted in various colors indicating that Hasbro was considering several different color schemes for the pod. As can be seen on the two right-most prototypes, the top hatch was attached. These 3D prints allowed the designers to test fit the hatch to ensure everything lined up and the hatch closed properly. Another set of SLA prototypes can be seen above, including the Queen's throne, some hyperdrives and a wall section of the ship. The two hyperdrive pieces on the left of the picture are the two halves (one is face-down) of that part of the toy. This prototype would

have allowed the engineer to test the fit between the two halves to insure it was correct and would work in production.

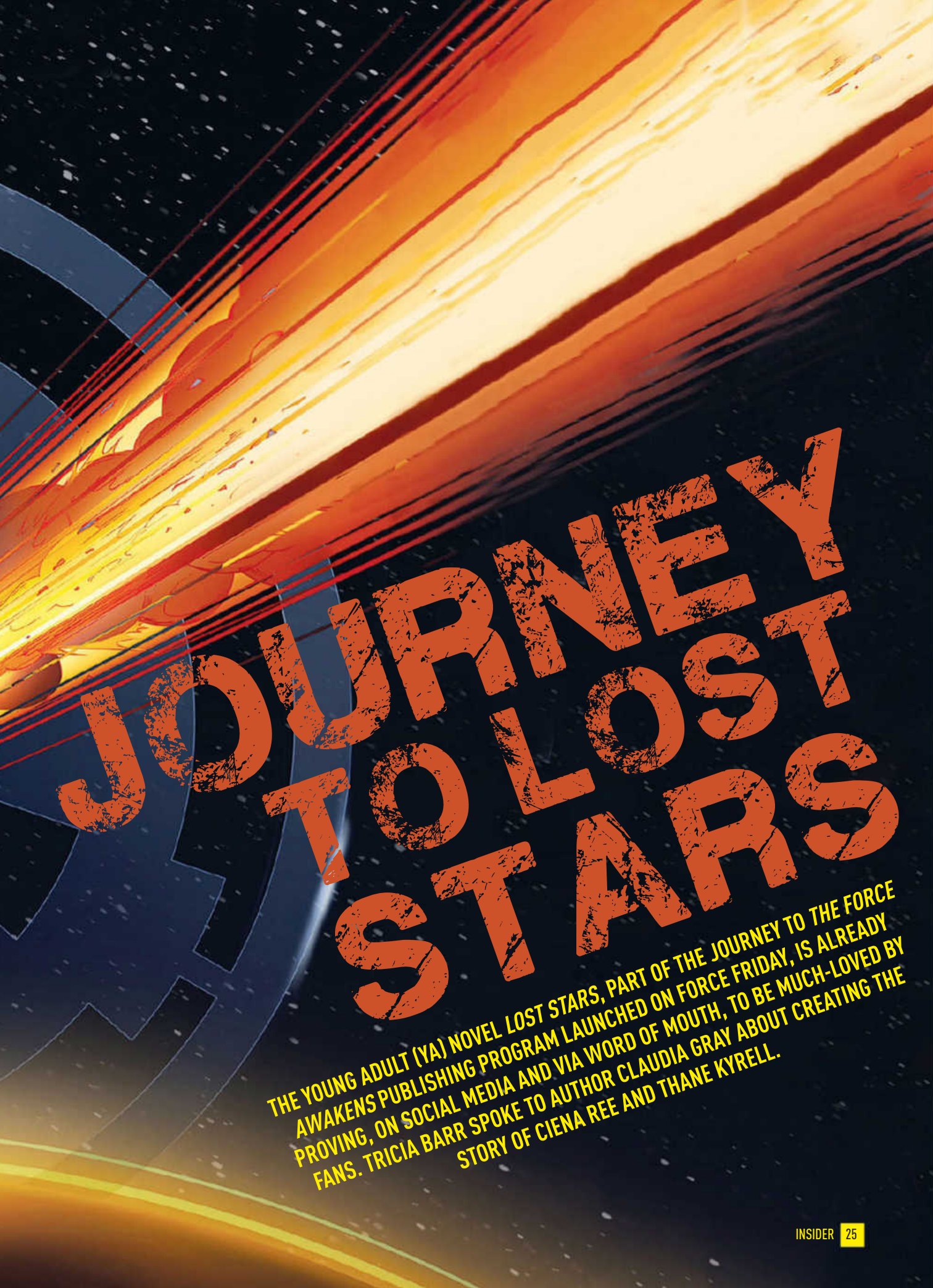
In the past, something as complicated as the Naboo Royal Starship would have been brought to life with the highly manual process of model and pattern building. With 3D printing, the models were created inside the computer with physical models taking a day to build rather than weeks. This allowed the designers to quickly experiment with designs, doing multiple passes and finding errors before committing

to the large expense of production tooling. The result is a better and cheaper toy that comes to market faster. It's amazing that these prototypes, showing the process, have survived to today. Other companies like Gentle Giant have taken these processes even further, using scanning techniques to build computer models of actors' faces. But more on that in another *Jedi Toy Box*.... 🤖

Words: Cj Fawcett

Photos: themanwhoshotluk Skywalker,





JOURNEY TO LOST STARS

THE YOUNG ADULT (YA) NOVEL LOST STARS, PART OF THE JOURNEY TO THE FORCE AWAKENS PUBLISHING PROGRAM LAUNCHED ON FORCE FRIDAY, IS ALREADY PROVING, ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIA WORD OF MOUTH, TO BE MUCH-LOVED BY FANS. TRICIA BARR SPOKE TO AUTHOR CLAUDIA GRAY ABOUT CREATING THE STORY OF CIENA REE AND THANE KYRELL.

At Celebration III, my first *Star Wars* convention, all of the books panels werestanding-room-only events. For example, one panel I attended featured Matthew Stover previewing his upcoming novelization of *Revenge of the Sith*. Fans of the Expanded Universe, now called Legends, were keen to see more from the author of *New Jedi Order: Traitor and Shatterpoint*. Many of the panel's attendees were regulars from message boards, with tags hung on our lanyards that identified our forum usernames. One by one, fans went to the microphone, and it became apparent from the parade of insightful questions how much about storytelling—point of view, characterization, dialogue—the audience had absorbed through interaction with the great storytellers writing *Star Wars* novels. This is as true of *Star Wars* authors and their wonderful stories now as it was then.

Today, the fandom discussion of *Star Wars* reading has moved into the realm of blogs and social media. Singing the praises for *Lost Stars* on Twitter at first was a lonely proposition, as most people had chosen other Journey to *The Force Awakens* books to tackle first. Dave Baril, for example, had started with Del Rey's *Aftermath* and DK Publishing's *Absolutely Everything You Need To Know*. Others' "purely glowing reviews" convinced Baril to give *Lost Stars* a try.

Unfortunately, some fans had initially bypassed *Lost Stars* because it was labeled as Young Adult. Too often the "YA" designation means books are immediately—and wrongly—dismissed as lesser quality or unworthy of grown-up consumption. Refinery 29's article on "30 Young Adult Books Every Actual Adult Should Read" includes "a list of well-written, engaging, thematically complex books that are likely to appeal to readers of any age," including classics such as *The Book Thief* and *A Wrinkle in Time*, and



Left: Author Claudia Gray.

Opposite page, right: Leia faces Tarkin, just prior to the destruction of Alderaan.

avoid some of the more obvious choices like *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter*, or *Catcher in the Rye*. The common thread across all of these novels is morally complex stories about finding ones self through personal challenge within larger frameworks of social-political upheaval in the storytelling setting. *A New Hope* and all the *Star Wars* movies that followed it work within similar conceits.

Outside of *Star Wars* fandom, YA novels have proven tremendously successful with readers of all generations. One of the interesting elements of modern popular YA, which straddles the teen-adult demographic quite successfully, is the avoidance of what many consider standard young audience endings. For example, *The Hunger Games* turns Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* on its head when the

Gamesmakers refuse to give Katniss and Peeta a fatal star-crossed lovers' ending—that series also does not offer a fairy-tale conclusion, either. Again, *Return of the Jedi* has parallels to the conceits of YA storytelling by offering a tangible victory for the underdog rebellion that succeeds in blowing up the second Death Star, but only an abstract validation of Luke and Padmé's belief there was good in Darth Vader. It is not surprising to observe that a return to the YA spirit of the *Star Wars* movies is finding great payoff in the marketplace, whether with longtime books fans or first-time *Star Wars* readers.

Ultimately, word of mouth unites *Lost Stars* with more and more readers every day, with newly minted teenage and adult *Star Wars* fans discovering the book.

At New York Comic Con, Claudia Gray announced her new adult *Star Wars* novel, *New Republic: Bloodline* set six years before *The Force Awakens*, which makes it a perfect time to get to know her and her approach to storytelling.

Star Wars Insider: What are your earliest *Star Wars* memories?

Claudia Gray: The movie came out when I was seven years old, so while I vividly remember loving it, going to see it repeatedly (four times, I think), and playing variations on *Star Wars* with all my friends, it's hard to pick out a specific memory or memories as being the very earliest. Surely the X-wing simulator I made in my closet has to be from the first year or two. One thing that still stands out in our family history was right after *The Empire Strikes Back*—my brother and I would get different action figures, to make sure we got the widest array of them. I allowed my brother to take Lando to school, where he shamefully traded my Lando—for a lowly Hoth ranger, no less! We continue to bicker about this. We are in our forties.



"I ASKED IF THE IDEALISTIC GIRL COULD JOIN THE EMPIRE WHILE THE CYNICAL GUY JOINS THE REBELS. THE BOOK BEGAN TO TAKE SHAPE FROM THERE."

Were you given an objective for *Lost Stars*?

The basic concept was "*Romeo & Juliet* meets *Star Wars*," with childhood friends falling in love; the idealistic girl would join the rebels, and the dark, cynical guy would join the Empire. I asked if the idealistic girl could join the Empire while the cynical guy joined the rebels. The editor loved that idea, and the book began to take shape from there. In the end, I hope it came out less *Romeo & Juliet*, more *Casablanca*. It felt important for the war to shape every stage of their romance.

Ciena Ree and Thane Kyrell grow up as citizens of the Empire. The worldbuilding around their home planet, Jelucan,

shapes their reactions to the government they serve as Imperial officers. Did you create the valley kindred and second-wave cultures first, devise a backstory that built a foundation for the ending you wanted, or was the process more organic?

The fundamental question at the beginning was, "Why would a good person serve the Empire?" At the beginning, that loyalty can be a matter of believing in the government, hearing only propaganda about the other side, etc.—but at a certain point, that person's fundamental values have to come into play. So the culture of the valley kindred began to take shape from the question of what values would keep someone in Imperial service, namely a very strong belief in honor and duty. Then you ask what kind of culture wouldn't mix well with that, and you get the more materialistic, hedonistic second-wavers. Thane and Ciena very naturally took shape along with those societies.

Thane is an easily recognizable *Star Wars* archetype: a person who isn't inclined to trust authority in the vein of Han Solo or Anakin Skywalker. Likewise, Ciena has similarities with the prequel trilogy Jedi, both blinded by a sense of duty. How did you tackle the fine line of keeping her character sympathetic yet tragically flawed?

Ciena's honor matters to her so much; she swore an oath to the Empire, has managed to actually do some real good in its service, and cares deeply about her friends who serve alongside her. Also, the impact of the first Death Star's destruction had to be

From left to right: Darth Vader makes his presence felt on the Death Star; Mon Mothma leads the rebels on *Home One*.



huge for her. She lost one of the most important people in her life there, meaning that she was never going to think well of the Rebel Alliance. Giving her a strong, relatable reason for distrusting the rebels helps us understand why she'd stand with the Empire.

Fans have often wondered about the personal impact of Alderaan's destruction. *Lost Stars* reveals how the Death Star's first target affects individuals. Nash Windrider's reaction as an Alderaanian was a twist, but once it was revealed, it made sense. How did you decide to make an Alderaanian into an Imperial zealot?

On Netflix, there's a documentary called *Crazy Love*. It's about a man and woman who were dating in the 1960s or so. She began to drift away from him; he attacked her with acid, mutilating her face and nearly blinding her. He went to prison. When he was released, they got married —this man she never really loved before and hardly even seems to love now. Interpretations of the movie and the real-life relationship will differ, but what I took from it is that sometimes we will cling *so tightly* to the very thing that hurt us, because that's the only way we can make ourselves believe we didn't really get hurt that badly. Forgiving the wrongdoing can sometimes be the first step to minimizing it. You hide the scar, then you deny the scar. After Alderaan's destruction, Nash has nothing left but the Empire. So the Empire has to become everything to him, or else he's completely destroyed.

“WOULDN'T WE ALL BE FREAKED OUT BY VADER'S PRESENCE? HE'S A SEVEN-FOOT-TALL GUY WITH BLACK ARMOR, AND A TENDENCY TO STRANGLE PEOPLE WHO DISPLEASE HIM.”



Mon Mothma's encounter with Thane brought a lovely touch of humanity to a larger-than-life character. Why did you want to use her in Thane's evolution as a rebel?

I always loved Mon Mothma. She is the only other woman we ever get to know in the Rebellion besides Princess Leia, so I always wanted to know what she was like and see more of her. So it was exciting to have a chance to write her! Also, at that point, I needed a mentor figure for Thane while he's struggling with fighting against Ciena, but I wanted the scene to have humor instead of being purely sad. Giving Thane a retroactively embarrassing moment with the head of the *entire Rebellion* seemed to fit the bill.

Darth Vader's ominous presence is something that Ciena feels physically whenever he is near. What inspired your portrayal of her interactions with Vader?

Wouldn't we all be freaked out in Darth Vader's presence? He's a seven-foot-tall guy with black armor, heavy breathing, and a tendency to strangle people who displease him. That's as ominous as it gets.

YA and romance have become synonymous, and for many it is one of the key ingredients of *Star Wars*. Why do you think romantic stories captivate audiences?

At its best, romance is fundamentally a story about synthesis. Two forces—even if they're opposites—combine and become stronger together. That's true from

Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, who teach each other to be more cautious and more humble, respectively—all the way to Han and Leia, where he helps her down from her pedestal to have fun and she helps him discover the less cynical, more noble side to his character. (To some extent, Thane and Ciena's love story is star-crossed because they *can't* reach that point of synthesis, even though they have made each other better in so many ways.) In my opinion, human beings are almost hard-wired to respond to that kind of a story. We love fiction precisely because it can offer the kind of satisfying resolution reality is so stingy with.

What are your thoughts on the relationship between fandom and creators in this evolving age of social media?

I've been really lucky so far; my interactions with fans have been overwhelmingly positive. But I think you have to keep listening to your internal creative impulses, making stuff out of your own imagination, and have faith that somebody out there is going to get what you're going for. I'm also a huge fangirl, but I keep my fannish identity separate from my professional one. Sometimes I just want to play like any other kid in the sandbox. If I didn't have the joy of being a fan, it would take a lot of the fun out of being a creator. 📺

MORE TO SAY

Connect with Claudia Gray and Tricia Barr on Twitter: @claudiagray and @fangirlcantina.

HAVE YOU?



ROLL WITH IT

THE TALE OF BB-8

THE AMAZING STORY BEHIND THE MUST-HAVE STAR WARS TOY!

BB-8 is one of the coolest new characters from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Fans love the unique, little droid. Back in September, the Sphero BB-8 was one of the most popular items during Force Friday, rolling under many Christmas trees over the holiday season. The toy is a marvelous piece of technology, made by a relatively new and small company out of Boulder, Colorado, named Sphero.

The company was established in 2010 out of a business incubator called Techstars. A couple of entrepreneurs, Ian Bernstein and Adam Wilson, had the idea for making a robot that was controlled by a

smartphone. They landed on a robot ball that you could control by swiping your finger across a phone's screen. CEO Paul Berberian, was the pair's mentor in the program and came on board full time when the company began.

"We launched a product that most people didn't think would sell," says Berberian. It was an expensive item sold only in consumer electronic and specialty stores. Part of the success is that the toy was embraced by the education market in order to teach kids about programming and technology and it is used in thousands of classrooms across the world.

In mid-summer of 2014, Berberian, recognizing that Sphero was really an entertainment company, was able to get them involved in a joint program run by Techstars and Disney. On the first day of the program, they met with Bob Iger, the CEO of Disney. After seeing Sphero's product, Iger pulled out his smart phone and showed them some photos from the set of *The Force Awakens*. Recognizing that Sphero's product was already half way to a BB-8 toy, Iger asked them if they could make it.

"That evening, we went back and made a prototype of what is now selling on shelves," says Berberian. They showed it to Iger and several others and a licensing agreement was soon followed. Because they had seen only a still image, the Sphero





Recognizing that Sphero's product was already half way to a BB-8, Disney CEO Bob Iger asked if Sphero could make it.



team had to make some assumptions about how BB-8 moved. "We eventually got to see more imagery and some videos of the puppeteers using it," says Paul, "and we realized we were pretty close to a dead ringer."

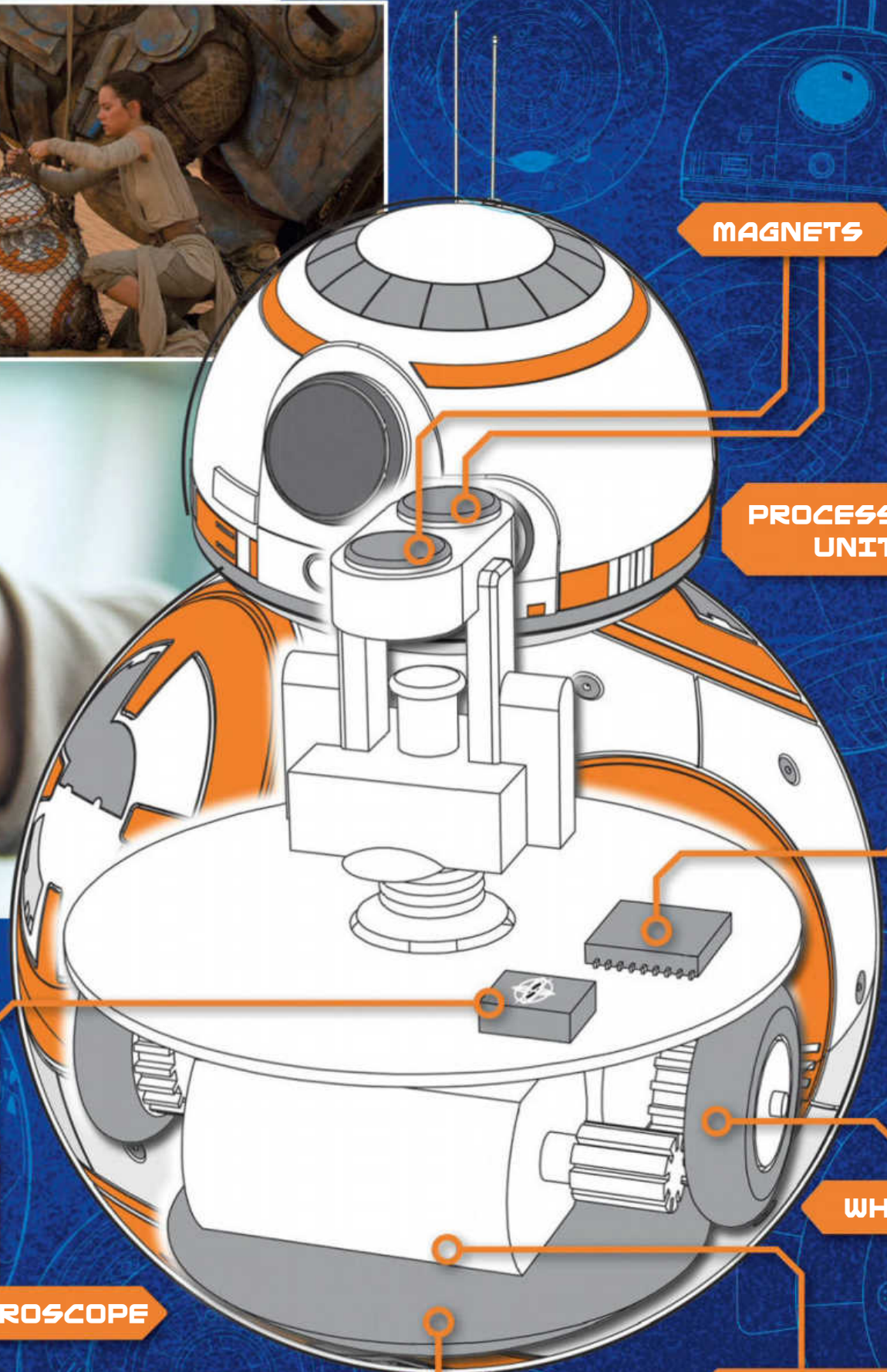
So how does the little guy work? The basic mechanics aren't that complicated. Inside the sealed ball is a small platform to which two wheels are mounted. The wheels are independently controlled by two separate motors with drive gears that can drive them in forward, reverse, or one in each direction. A weight keeps the wheels held down against the inside of the sphere. When the wheels spin, they move the ball. Depending on the speed and direction of the wheels, BB will move straight, turn, or spin about in circles. Think of a hamster in one of those clear balls and you have the

Think of a hamster in one of those clear balls and you have the basic idea of how BB-8 works.

basic idea. The head, which is a non-electronic representation of BB's head, is held on with magnets to a stem rising off the main platform.

The key to stability, however, is the gyroscope. A gyroscope is essentially a wheel spinning on an axel. The interesting thing about gyroscopes is that, due to complex physics, the axel tends to want to always stay pointing in the same direction it was pointing when the wheel started spinning. The gyroscope inside BB helps him always know which way is down. A computer monitoring the gyroscope and using that information to help drive the wheels is what enables BB to be responsive to the controls.

But the real magic is in a sophisticated control system that Sphero has developed that makes BB-8 work so smoothly. Berberian explains, "One of the things



MAGNETS

PROCESSING UNIT

WHEEL

MOTOR

GYROSCOPE

WEIGHT

Because BB-8 is a character, Sphero focused on personality when it came to designing its movements.

you'll notice is if you put BB-8 on a hard surface and the motors are off, he'll just rock and then eventually stop. But then we turn on our control system and he will resist being rocked. He will try to do a maneuver to stop rocking. You'll see him do a little animation to try to stabilize himself. He'll also look around over time and won't sit idle. We put so many hours into trying to make that look cool. It feels kind of alive. It has a little mind of its own."

Because BB-8 is a character, Sphero really focused on personality when it came to designing its movements. The developers have a personality animation engine. Much like a CGI artist for *The Force Awakens* might, the designers would animate certain actions for BB-8 in the computer. That animation would then go through a translation mechanism to map the movement to the physical world so the real life toy would mimic the animation. If it sometimes seems like BB's actions are life-like, this is why. Real people animated him, so it's more than just some mathematical algorithms happening under the dome.

As mentioned, BB-8 was a huge success on Force Friday. The toy sold out in hours—and demand continues to be high. "It was off the charts," said Berberian. "We thought we were ordering a lot of units when we loaded up the stores. But we misjudged by a factor of three, and probably even that's conservative." The reviews for the toy have been stellar, with many calling BB-8 the hot toy of the 2015 Holiday season.

Berberian chalks up the success to the fans. "They're super passionate, super loyal, incredibly enthusiastic, and generally just a blast to be with. We love them. The fan base for *Star Wars* adds to the mystique around the story and the franchise. Because there's such a strong following, it builds up this excitement and anticipation. It's just a bunch of people having a blast with a common story they all share. It's truly magical." 🌟

Words: Cj Fawcett

Illustration: Larry T. McKinney



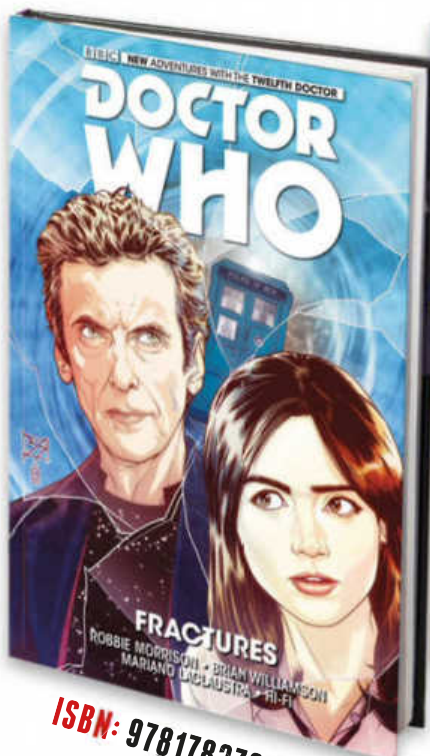
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RADIO DRAMA!



THE DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER OF THE GROUNDBREAKING *STAR WARS* RADIO DRAMA LOOK BACK ON EXPANDING THE SAGA. INTERVIEW BY BRYAN YOUNG



Opposite page:

John Madden and Tom Voegeli prepare to hit "record" and make *Star Wars* history!

This page, from top: Matt Busch's art for Highbridge Audio's 2013 "Light Side" CD release of the radio drama; *Fantastic Films* heralds the audio drama on the cover of its June 1981 issue. In an increasingly visual world, even back then, only a *Star Wars* radio production would have the power to feature on the cover of a magazine.

John Madden and Tom Voegeli aren't typically two names one identifies with *Star Wars*. John Madden is the film director whose 1999 movie, *Shakespeare in Love*, garnered huge success at the Academy Awards®, winning Best Picture.

Tom Voegeli is a Grammy and Peabody Award-winning producer for National Public Radio (NPR) and American Public Media.

Together, they were the director and producer, respectively, of all three *Star Wars* radio dramas produced for NPR in the 1980s and 90s. With the help of writer Brian Daley, they were tasked with expanding the story of the *Star Wars* films and communicating them in a medium never before used for a film of the size and scope of *Star Wars* in the audio drama format.

To commemorate 35 years of the radio adaptation of *A New Hope*, Madden and Voegeli spoke to *Insider's* Bryan Young about how they got involved, how they look





This spread: Topps' trading cards' 2013 set used art by fan favorite *Star Wars* artists, Randy Martinez and Matt Busch, to interpret key scenes from the radio drama. Martinez's art was used for the "Dark Side" variant of the CD cover (opposite page).

back on it now, and whether or not they'd ever go back to a galaxy far, far away.

How did the two of you get the job in the first place?

Tom Voegeli: Before we did the first thirteen episodes, there had been an attempt by the BBC to do something. They'd proposed some scripts to Lucasfilm that Lucasfilm didn't like at all because they took too much liberty with the material. So George Lucas, as a USC graduate, had given the rights to do these radio adaptations to KUSC in Los Angeles, [Lucas was an alumnus of the university and KUSC was its radio station]. KUSC then brought in NPR and they were very interested in doing this. They put together the team and that's

"WE WERE RE-DRAWING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FILM IN PEOPLE'S HEADS, WHICH IS A RATHER INTERESTING WAY OF USING RADIO, RATHER DIFFERENT FROM WHAT RADIO DRAMA NORMALLY IS." —JOHN MADDEN

how we started going. Lucasfilm suggested the writer, a guy named Brian Daley, who was kind of in their stable. So Brian came in. I looked at a fellow, John Madden, as we had actually done radio drama together.

John Madden: In 1975, I first came to America to take up a job to work for and develop a script for an

embryonic radio drama project called *Earplay*. The idea was to create ten or fifteen radio dramas a year that were specifically commissioned from prominent writers to breathe life back into radio drama, which is essentially an art form that died in the U.S. when radio went commercial. Commercial



just meant music and so any form of national radio drama just didn't exist. I was recruited from the BBC radio drama department, where I was working at that point, to come and set up a script department, with a guy called Howard Gelman. We started to produce radio drama out of Madison or more usually Minneapolis. We were producing radio drama in a way that was wildly more sophisticated than, say, the BBC were doing because we didn't have any dedicated studios or anything to work with, so we worked out of a recording facility with multitrack technology and were able to produce a complexity of sound that was very sophisticated to people.

What connections did you have to *Star Wars* before working on it? Presumably, you saw the movie when it came out?

Tom Voegeli: No, I didn't right away. I remember, frankly, it had had such incredible buzz, which is dangerous if you don't see the movie right away; if you see it a month later, it never lives up to its buzz. And I remember thinking that I wasn't blown away by *Star Wars*. I had no real connections to it before the radio adaptations were done. **John Madden:** It was everywhere, and, like most people remember where they were when Kennedy was shot, or whatever, I can remember the first time I saw *Star Wars*, which

was in Minneapolis. I just went along to the mall with everybody else and saw it, and I remember the occasion incredibly vividly; it was really not like anything you'd ever seen before. It had an astonishing kind of grit and there was an exhilaration in watching it, which had to do with its effects, its technology, and its storytelling and its sense of humor; I remember being incredibly responsive to it. It was just a proper full blown sort of cinematic revolution, is what it felt like. I would count myself a fan at that point.



Left: Tom Voegeli, John Madden, and the writer of the *Star Wars* audio productions, the much-missed Brian Daley.

Below:

Cast-members Anthony Daniels (C-3PO), Bernard Behrens (Ben (Obi-Wan) Kenobi), Perry King (Han Solo), and Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker).

Right: Luke and Biggs reunited!



What made radio important and a challenge for *Star Wars*?

John Madden: Radio, obviously, famously, is an extraordinarily imaginative medium because you're suggesting worlds. There are no rules in a radio drama until the final word is spoken. It's something of a cliché now, but it remains true, that the world it invokes is something that's done in collaboration with the listener, because you have to provide the landscape of the story yourself and imagine the people you are dealing with and so forth. *Star Wars* was a very unusual beast in the sense we were providing a set of imagery and circumstance that was already very vividly imprinted on your mind from the film. We

"THE LIBERTIES BRIAN DALEY TOOK AND THE ADDITIONAL SCENES THAT HE PROPOSED PLEASED LUCASFILM."

—TOM VOEGELI

had certain fantastically strong cues for that in the conventional sense because, through Lucasfilm, we had access to all of Ben Burtt's sound effects and all of the music. We were essentially re-drawing the experience of the film in people's

heads, which is a very interesting way of using radio, rather different from what radio drama normally is. You're not usually referencing another piece of work in quite the way we were there.



What was working with Ben Burtt like?

Tom Voegeli: I had complete access to his incredible work, which I had to collect from him. We went out to dinner one night, and I remember part of my job, I felt, was to convince him that the effects would never leave my hands. I actually put all the tapes in a suitcase and bought a seat for them on the plane. Cellists do that. They put their cello in a seat and they strap it in. That's what I did with those. And I promised they would never ever leave my hands; I would never copy them, which I never ever did.

Later on, I had the whole set of effects on the worst technology ever made in audio, which was the DAT (Digital Audio Tape); when I eventually got rid of those, thinking I didn't want to have them,

I destroyed them physically so they couldn't be copied; I kept my word to him. But I remember thinking that he must have got a memo from somebody saying, I was going to show up on Monday and copy all these effects—he must have been mortified by that! I did spend some time just saying, "I promise you, personally, forget about what's in the contract, of what was to be done with the effects, that I won't let you down!"

What about the adaptation itself and working with Brian Daley?

Tom Voegeli: Brian proposed the breakdown of the scripts, what would

happen in each episode, what would be additional, and then John and I responded to that. There was a fair amount of back and forth, but Brian was pretty much on target. Lucasfilm liked his work. The liberties that he took and the additional scenes that he proposed basically pleased them. There were a couple of scenes they didn't want to add in, but mostly, whatever the ideas he had were so much within the *Star Wars* bible that we were able to do it. The places where we needed help was with the action stuff. The classic worst line in audio



Left: Luke finds his target during the final attack on the Death Star.

Below: An expanded scene as heard in the radio drama as Luke pilots his T-16 Skyhopper.

drama is, "This gun in my left hand is loaded," right? How you work through those kinds of problems where you're not seeing what's going on, you need a little help with. But mostly that was John actually working with Brian. Once he proposed what the episodes would be and did a rough draft of the script, most of the back and forth was between John as the director and Brian.

John Madden: It was a very good experience working with him. He had a personality that suited the assignment brilliantly. He was the best kind of *Star Wars* geek. He knew everything about the story, the characters, and the situation. He was not short of ideas and ways of writing things. I seem to remember him having to be held back from some of his ideas initially, because he possibly exceeded the brief or there was some brand control that had to be enforced at a certain point, but that's not because he was particularly rebellious; he was just taking his part seriously, which is to be inventive for another medium. He



had a great sense of humor, limitless energy, and was a very fast, deft writer. It was a whole lot of fun doing that with him. 🍌
Next issue, Madden and Voegeli discuss their favorite scenes, those hardest to adapt, and how they re-cast such iconic roles. Plus, John Madden talks about the possibility of the prequels as audio dramas!

MORE TO SAY

The *Star Wars* audio dramas are available from HighBridge Audio.

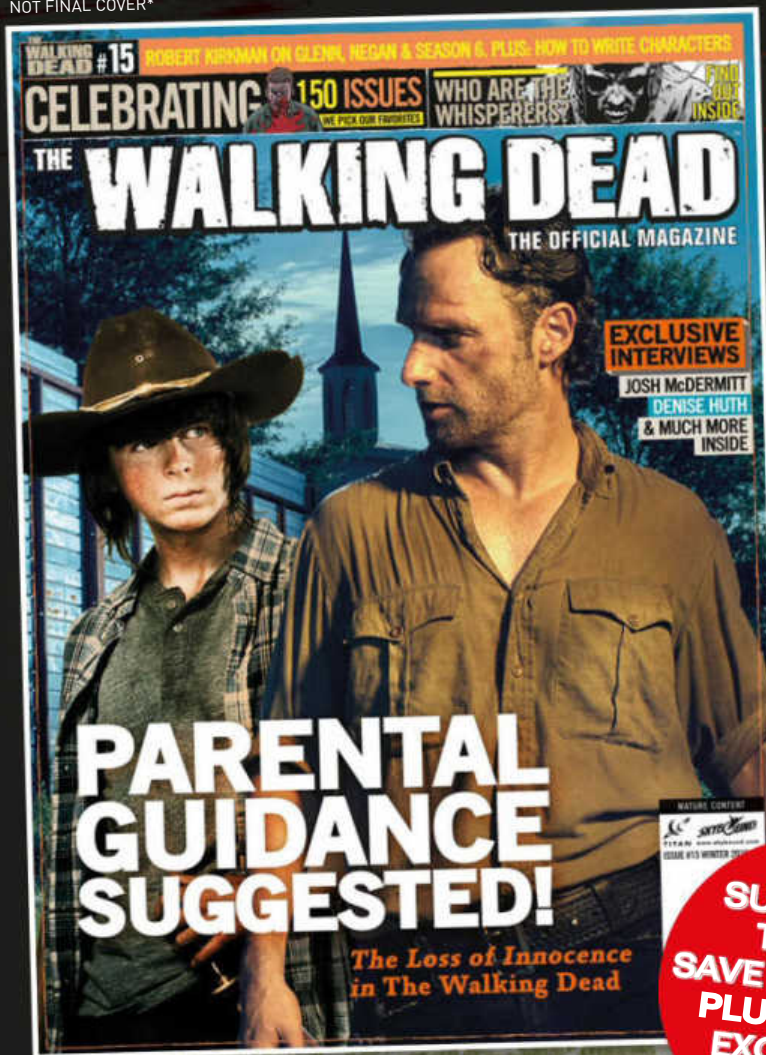
You can follow Bryan Young on Twitter @swankmotron.

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IN THE SECOND PART OF HER
EXPLORATION OF OBI-WAN KENOBI'S
ROLE IN *STAR WARS* (SEE ISSUE 161
FOR PART ONE), TRICIA BARR
CONSIDERS HIS IMPACT IN THE TIME OF
THE PREQUEL TRILOGY.

THE GUDED GENERAL

The Hero's Journey is not about the destination, but rather the iterative trek toward the discovery of inner self. As a medium, film tends to compartmentalize each cycle into a neat package, with a victory to wrap up each evolution with a tidy bow. The massive scale of *Star Wars*, with its movies, animated television shows, books, and comics, has allowed many heroic cycles to unfold, not only for the central protagonists but also for other characters in his or her orbit. In *Insider* #161, I detailed Obi-Wan Kenobi's transitions through various familiar mythic archetypes, from noble Knight to Wizard and ultimately, Martyr, over the course of *A New Hope*. His presence is integral to Luke's growth, and to Leia's too, as she seeks her father's former ally from the Clone Wars. *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* reveal Obi-Wan's heroic journey to be intricately intertwined with the tragic fall of Luke and Leia's father, Anakin Skywalker, two decades earlier.



JEDI ORDER OF THE REPUBLIC

The monomyth begins with the hero in an ordinary world, typically crafted in the worldbuilding as a humble existence. Anakin's life as a slave on the Outer Rim world, Tatooine, hits these markers in *The Phantom Menace* in the same way as Luke's life on a moisture farm in *A New Hope*. Obi-Wan's heroic journey onscreen begins with a clandestine mission from the Chancellor, alongside his Master, Qui-Gon Jinn,



Main image: General Obi-Wan Kenobi, a key player in the Clone Wars. **Left:** Qui-Gon Jinn meets Chancellor Valorum, as Obi-Wan observes.

to resolve an interplanetary standoff. From a certain point of view, however, this is nonetheless an ordinary world. For apprentice Kenobi and his peers in the Jedi Order, life in the Temple is mundane. They get up, put on their robes one sleeve at a time, and function as peacekeepers during a prosperous era for a galaxy that has been relatively free from war. For Obi-Wan, life as a Jedi apprentice is an ordinary existence that plays out with

certain expectations. At the start of *The Phantom Menace*, the two Jedi believe their assignment to be entirely routine. Although pop culture has conditioned audiences to expect lowly individuals to rise to heroism, when examining and creating stories it is important to remember that the heroic journey begins with a dramatic shift in the character's anticipated life trajectory. Ordinary is what the storyteller makes of it. Viewed in that light, *The Phantom Menace* sets up converging heroic cycles for Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker.

Clues within the framework of *The Phantom Menace* suggest that serving as Qui-Gon's apprentice challenged Obi-Wan's understanding of the Force and how a Jedi should behave. Qui-Gon





HERO OF THE CLONE WARS

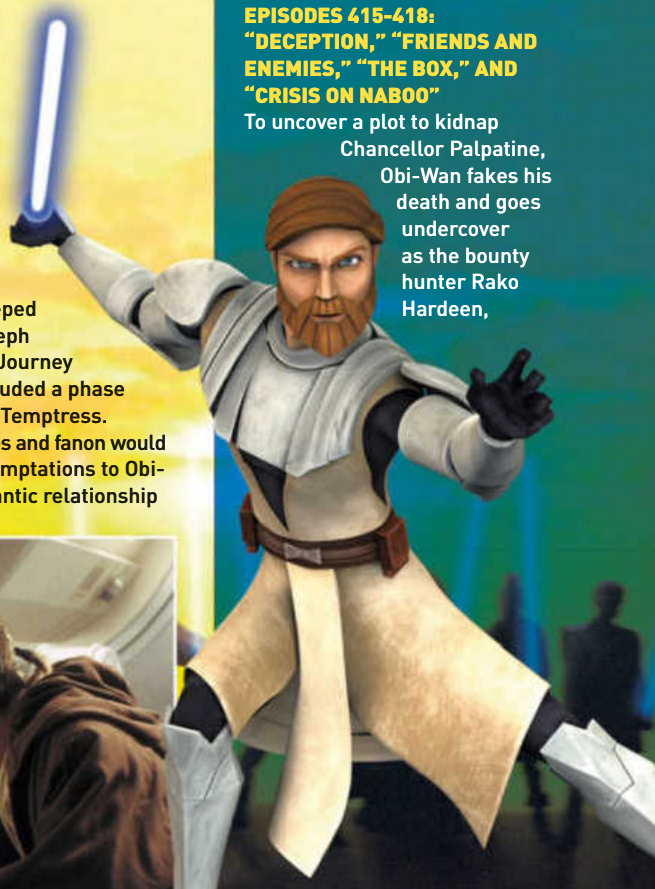
While the prequel trilogy films contain many steps of the Hero's Journey for Obi-Wan Kenobi, further stages in his path are revealed in *The Clone Wars*. Yoda, Mace Windu, and even Jar Jar Binks receive similar treatment in the animated television series, bringing to fans a deeper understanding of the events that shaped the characters' choices. Here is a selection of episodes that expand on these characters' journeys.

EPISODES 212-214: "THE MANDALORE PLOT," "VOYAGE OF TEMPTATION," AND "DUCHESS OF MANDALORE"

When the two Jedi are sent to help root out treason within the government of the pacifist Duchess Satine, Obi-Wan admits to Anakin that, years earlier as a Padawan, he had harbored romantic feelings for her, but had chosen to follow his commitment to the Jedi.

EPISODES 415-418: "DECEPTION," "FRIENDS AND ENEMIES," "THE BOX," AND "CRISIS ON NABOO"

To uncover a plot to kidnap Chancellor Palpatine, Obi-Wan fakes his death and goes undercover as the bounty hunter Rako Hardeen,



Clockwise from above: The first encounter with Jar Jar Binks; taking on Darth Maul and Savage Opress; a tense moment on Geonosis; armored up during the early stages of the Clone Wars; Qui-Gon introduces Anakin to Obi-Wan.

is centered and focused—who can forget the moment he kneels and meditates while Darth Maul paces and stares when their battle is disrupted by laser gates?—and actor Liam Neeson brought an aura of tempered passion to the role that made him a favorite, especially with female fans. His dedication to the ways of the Force are revealed through wise counsel, such as "Your focus determines your reality," or his calm acceptance of Jar Jar Binks' mischief upon crossing paths with the Gungan in the swamps of Naboo. Qui-Gon cautions Obi-Wan, who spouts Master Yoda's lesson of being "mindful of the future," with a reminder to not do so "at the expense of the moment." Qui-Gon saves a queen, accepts a handmaiden and Gungan outcast as part of his mission, breaks bread with slaves, and assuages a mother's fears for her son's future before facing off with a new Sith foe during the escape from Tatooine.

Although he serves the role of mentor, Qui-Gon bridges the divide between two worlds, one of opulence and comfort, and the other, lacking in both. Obi-Wan, on the other hand, does not accompany his Master as Qui-Gon crosses the divide between the two distinct

worlds. Obi-Wan does not actually witness Anakin's life as a slave for himself, or the mother he leaves behind. As Qui-Gon argues passionately on Anakin's behalf before the Jedi Council, Obi-Wan initially questions the young prodigy's role as a Jedi; he refuses the call to adventure, along with his future Padawan.

Obi-Wan: Do not defy the council, Master. Not again.

Qui-Gon: I shall do what I must, Obi-Wan.

Some fans interpreted romantic chemistry between the Jedi Master and Shmi Skywalker. Established *Star Wars* fans watching *The Phantom Menace* were already steeped in the classic Joseph Campbell Hero's Journey model, which included a phase called Woman As Temptress. Legends' storylines and fanon would ascribe similar temptations to Obi-Wan; later a romantic relationship





risking both his moral compass as a Jedi and Anakin's trust.

EPISODES 502-505: "A WAR ON TWO FRONTS," "FRONT RUNNERS," "THE SOFT WAR," AND "TIPPING POINTS"

Obi-Wan, Anakin, and Ahsoka assist the people of Onderon in their uprising against the tyrant presiding over the Separatist occupation of their planet, sowing the seeds of methods later used by the Rebellion against the evil Empire.

EPISODES 501 & 514-516: "REVIVAL," "EMINENCE," "SHADES OF REASON," AND "THE LAWLESS"

Feeling responsible for failing to kill him on Naboo a decade earlier, Obi-Wan pursues Darth Maul, Savage Opress, and their Shadow Collective across the galaxy, only to bring Duchess Satine into the crosshairs of Maul's cruel plans for revenge.

EPISODES 608-609: "THE DISAPPEARED: PARTS I-II"

A diplomatic mission to Bardotta showcases the wisdom and patience of Jedi Master Mace Windu and the political capabilities and cunning of Representative Jar Jar Binks.

EPISODES 610-613: "THE LOST ONE," "VOICES," "DESTINY," AND "SACRIFICE"

The discovery of the lightsaber of long-dead Jedi Master Sifo-Dyas leads Yoda on a perilous quest that reconnects him with the incorporeal spirit of Qui-Gon Jinn, who guides him to the mysterious Force Priestesses and new lessons about the true nature of the Force.

with Duchess Satine Kryze played out as canon in *The Clone Wars*.

But the importance of Qui-Gon's interaction with Shmi and her son is that he serves as a lens to enable the audience to connect with them, and more importantly to believe there is something special about Anakin Skywalker. He is not merely teeming with midi-chlorians; his role to bring balance to the Force has been foretold by a prophecy. Obi-Wan, having remained cautious about Anakin for most of *The Phantom Menace*, agrees to train the boy as Qui-Gon lies mortally wounded by a Sith Lord's blade. In Obi-Wan's heroic cycle, he has crossed the threshold from his ordinary world—one where he would train under his Master, submit to a Jedi trial, and eventually rise to the position of Knight in the usual routines of the Old Republic's Jedi Order—into a new adventure far beyond anything for which his life to that point could possibly have prepared him.

OBI-WAN KENOBI EMBODIES THE PROFOUND MORAL CONFLICT CREATED BY THE GALACTIC WAR.

Naboo and the Gungans can win the Battle of Theed. Yet, Qui-Gon's death begins a chain of events that pushes the Jedi Order ever further from their proper role of peacekeepers. Over the course of *Attack of the Clones* and into *Revenge of the Sith*, the Jedi Order's identity crisis is revealed through Jedi Masters Yoda and Mace Windu, but Obi-

Wan Kenobi embodies the profound moral conflict created by the galactic war.

Qui-Gon Jinn may have been Anakin Skywalker's first supernatural mentor, but it becomes obvious as the Sith machinations unfold that Palpatine has

been a guiding influence not only for Anakin, but also in corrupting the values of the Jedi Order. While Anakin enters his Woman As Temptress phase as he journeys to Naboo with Padmé Amidala, Obi-Wan has a Meeting With a Goddess in Kaminoan Taun We, who informs Kenobi of the existence of a vast clone army. Meanwhile Palpatine and Dooku continue to manipulate events in such a way that the Jedi are compelled to compromise their moral principles and decide that they can no longer simply protect, but must fight a war. *Revenge of the Sith* and later *The Clone Wars* television series bring to the fore how blinkered the Jedi Order has become, including Obi-Wan. At times Obi-Wan

THE CLONE WARS

"I can only protect you. I cannot fight a war for you," Qui-Gon tells Queen Amidala. The duel with Darth Maul serves as a diversion so the





AS IT SHOULD BE WITH WELL-DESIGNED MYTHIC CHARACTERS, OBI-WAN'S GREATEST STRENGTH IS ALSO HIS GREATEST WEAKNESS.

channels his former Jedi Master, questioning the Jedi Council's decisions regarding the war, Anakin's training, and the Chancellor, but ultimately he stays rigidly attached to the Order's mission and the Council's judgment. Then again, perhaps Obi-Wan's instincts had been right about training Anakin in the first place; and yet when the time came, he did what was asked of him.

As it should be with well-designed mythic characters, Obi-Wan's greatest strength—his faith in the Jedi and, more importantly, in his Jedi brother Anakin—is also his greatest weakness. His rigid and unwavering trust in the system into which he was born is echoed in Ciena Ree's honor-bound loyalty in *Star Wars: Lost Stars*, although some readers have been less

sympathetic toward Ciena's steadfastness. Both characters eventually reach the point in their journey where they must atone. For Ciena, she must accept the truth of the Empire's evil. At the start of Obi-Wan's showdown with Anakin on Mustafar, the Jedi declares his allegiance "to the Republic, to democracy." The closing moments of *Revenge of the Sith* reveal that Obi-Wan has shed his allegiance to the Republic and now simply serves the Force. This is his Ultimate Boon, to transcend from a Jedi of the Republic to a Jedi who serves the Force. This fulfillment of his cycle brings Obi-Wan full circle to the teachings of his Master. In *Attack of the Clones*, Qui-Gon's voice calling to Anakin as he massacres the Tusken Raiders hints at the possibility that the Jedi Master has formed a deeper connection with

the Force through death, but is unable to communicate this to the Jedi Order. Late in the Clone Wars, Qui-Gon makes contact with Yoda through the Force, leading him on a spiritual journey of discovery. Ultimately, Yoda foresees the end of the Jedi Order, yet also the path to hope for the future. Through Yoda's teachings after *Revenge of the Sith*, as revealed in the *Tantive IV* conference room after the decision to separate the newborn twins into hiding, Obi-Wan gains a deeper understanding of the Force. A changed man, he returns to the normal world, a very different world from the one where he started his journey. Now Obi-Wan is living as a hermit in the very desert where Anakin grew up a slave. There is no triumph in Obi-Wan's arc, only perseverance—but perhaps that is among the hardest tests of a human being, and why he is loved by so many as a hero of *Star Wars*. 🍷

Counter-clockwise from top: Obi-Wan takes one last look at Anakin Skywalker; the Jedi and the Duchess; Obi-Wan and Satine rekindle their romance; joining battle with the rebels of Onderon.

MORE TO SAY

Tricia Barr is co-author of *Ultimate Star Wars* and author of the award-winning space opera *Wynde*.

Follow her on Twitter @fangirlcantina

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MY STAR WARS

ACTOR **JACK KLAFF** PLAYED RED FOUR, KNOWN AS JOHN D. BRANON, ONE OF THE BRAVE PILOTS IN THE ASSAULT ON THE FIRST DEATH STAR. WE ASKED KLAFF WHAT THE SAGA MEANS TO HIM!
INTERVIEW: MARK NEWBOLD

What was your reaction to seeing *Star Wars* for the very first time?

I was completely amazed by it. There's two things about *Star Wars* that are really very powerful. One is the technology, a lot of it was new; and secondly, the storytelling was based on Joseph Campbell and the structure of myth. You get that in movies anyway, but George Lucas really studied it. *Star Wars* has such a hold on people, young and old. In the end, it's old fashioned, mythical storytelling.

What do you love about being a *Star Wars* celebrity?

I suppose the most important thing is when I'm teaching and dealing with younger people—it's a way to start a conversation.

When did you first become aware of *Star Wars* fandom?

I was in Stratford Upon Avon, performing Shakespeare, and I walked out after a performance and this American lady said, "Oh my God! Were you in *Star Wars*?" And she wrote to me two days later saying she enjoyed the Shakespeare, but what a thing it was, *Star Wars*. She'd already seen it 27 times and this was in 1977.

Do you have a favorite scene?

No, not really. I think what I was amazed by was the battle at the end of *A New Hope*. I haven't seen it since. I've seen bits of it while the kids are watching.



I think I was blown away by the technology of it, which was sort of extraordinary. Now people probably look down on it but then it was powerful.

Could you reveal something about yourself that would surprise a *Star Wars* fan?

As well as being in *Star Wars*, I was in a series called *Space: 1999*, and in 1999 I was headhunted and became a professor of public understanding of science in a think tank in Brussels.

Where did you sign your very first *Star Wars* autograph?

In the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, in the UK. I do quite enjoy it. It's weird, in a way. I've just finished the run of something, I'm writing something and I can just sit here and meet people and think about my writing. One time I was at one of the conventions and John Mollo, the designer of the costumes, was standing there with his Oscars. I thought, *What must it be like?* He said that it was bizarre to see people wearing those costumes that he designed.

What's the best gift being in *Star Wars* has given to you?

The pride of my children! My daughter's boyfriend's Mom was just blown away because I was in it. That sort of thing where people say, "That's so cool," because to me it was just a gig!

Which is your favorite *Star Wars* film?

The one I'm in! 😊





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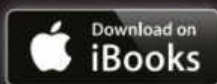
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THE PERFECT WEAPON

An extract from the ebook by Delilah S. Dawson



The night was young, and Bazine Netal was hunting. Curled up on a stool in formfitting black that matched her eyes, lips, and hair, she scanned the room for her contact and found only fools. Clumsy admirers frequently took her cold stare for an invitation. In her line of work, being beautiful was often a boon. But it was also an inconvenience.

"Good evening, my lady."

She looked up and frowned. She'd noted this witless Devaronian earlier, when he'd suffered a spectacular loss at sabacc. Now, reeking of liquor and overconfidence, he reached for her knee, slurring something about the heat of the desert sands and the curves of her bountiful dunes. Before his filthy fingers could touch her, she snapped his wrist like a twig. He screamed and fell to the

sand-dusted floor, calling her all manner of names, but she only yawned and looked away. He clearly was not the man she was looking for. His friends hurried up to him, took one look at Bazine, and muttered dark promises as they carried him out, the man squealing like a Huttlet the entire time. She eased farther into the shadowy corner, swirling the drink in her glass with fastidious, black-tipped fingers.

She hadn't tasted the drink, of course. She never did.

Drinks could be poisoned at any moment. She'd already poisoned one tonight. The effects wouldn't be obvious until her mark was safely back home, contentedly sleeping. He wouldn't wake up again. And then her comlink would ping softly, letting her know her unknown employer was pleased and had deposited creds in her account.

What Bazine needed now was a new job

to keep her occupied. She'd been waiting for this new contact for hours and was already bored, and the men could smell it on her. Another one appeared at the edge of her table, fingers stroking his blaster.

"You lonely, sweetness?" he asked, flipping a toothpick with his tongue.

She looked him up and down. The slight human junker presented neither threat nor enticement. Definitely not her man. He looked her up and down in return. High-heeled wedge boots, black leather leggings clinging to shapely legs, tight-fitting jacket that concealed armor and weapons, not that he could've known that, nor could he know that the severe black bob was a wig. When his eyes reached her stark, chiseled face again, he leered. "Because you look . . . lonely."

"And you look like a diseased mynock. Move along." She waved a hand at him and

scooted farther back in her booth, kicking her legs up onto the table to discourage further disturbances.

"You think you're too good for me?" he sputtered, reaching for his blaster with a shaking hand.

"Of course not. I know I'm too good for you."

With one simple but elegant kick, she struck a nerve cluster in his thigh that sent him sprawling onto the rough floor. This man had no friends to pick him back up. He had no choice but to crawl away on hands and knees, cursing her.

That, at least, made her smile a little.

A waitress appeared, wiping a wet rag across the table as she watched the junker's retreat.

"You keep openly maiming the customers and Suli won't let you in the door," the orange-eyed Duros girl said. "They can't tip with broken bones."

Bazine tossed a few credit chips on the table. "It's not my fault Suli's establishment attracts scoundrels, Ooda." It was as close as she'd come to an apology, and Ooda nodded and scooped up the creds, which was as close as she'd come to forgiveness. They had an unspoken agreement, these two, even though they'd been in the same orbit for years. It was the same arrangement Bazine had with all her acquaintances: no asking questions and no getting friendly.

"Oh, and Suli said to tell you he'd be here soon."

Ooda turned to go, and Bazine called after her, "Who?"

The Duros shrugged as she walked away. "Didn't ask, don't want to know."

Bazine had an agreement with Suli, too. He'd send jobs her way, and in return she acted as unofficial bouncer, quietly removing anyone who caused trouble. Even the most violent drunks would follow her outside for the promise of a kiss. Technically speaking, she had told the cantina owner that she'd wait to maim the customers until they were out back in a private alley. She scanned the bar for Suli, made eye contact, and gave the barest nod to indicate understanding.

The night wore on, and her contact didn't show. She'd gently rebuffed seven more scoundrels and watched twice as many bad hands at sabacc before something clattered in her glass, splashing amber liquid onto the stained table. Her head jerked up, hunting for the source of the interruption. The scenery had not changed. Not a single new pair of eyes watched her; nor were any strangers circling her table as they practiced bad

pickup lines under their breath. She knew this bar, and she knew all the other mercs, and she recognized most of these lowlifes, even if they didn't recognize her, thanks to a rotating gallery of disguises. But she had never before had any suitors attempt to gain her attention by dropping a room key in her glass.

Her eyes cut left and right before her elbow shot out, knocking the drink over. "Oops."

She hooked a finger through the key ring, doing her best not to smudge the matte-black rishi eel ink she wore painted on her forefingers to cloak her fingerprints. ROOM 3, the tag read. Could be an invitation. Could be the job. Either way, she was going to find out. Sliding off her stool, she stood and stretched, readjusting her severe but exquisite outfit as she subtly checked her weapons. Snub-nosed blaster: check. Slender blade: check.

**SNUB-NOSED
BLASTER: CHECK.
SLENDER BLADE:
CHECK. SMALL THERMAL
DETONATORS HIDDEN IN THE
WEDGES OF HER
BOOTS: CHECK.**

Small thermal detonators hidden in the wedges of her boots: check. Seven throwing knives sewn into her jacket: check. Whatever the hotel guest hoped to pay her for, they were going to be surprised by her bag of tricks.

She headed for the long hallway that housed the beyond-loathsome toilet and the door to the stairs. She'd never visited the bar's second-floor lodging area, knowing it was used only by the dancing girls and high rollers, whether together or separately. The stairway was narrow and stank of sweat and worse, and she drew her blaster as she edged upward, careful not to touch the filthy banisters.

Aiming her blaster down each side of the hallway, she found nothing worth shooting. Identical numbered doors marched down the sand-colored paneling, various sounds whispering or thumping

rhythmically behind them. She paused beside door number three. Her back to the wall, she leaned an ear against the plasteel and heard nothing within. She knocked twice, quick, and slowed her breathing as she waited, blaster held aloft, for a response. None came.

How inhospitable.

Blaster in one hand, old-fashioned key in the other, ready to run or shoot, she unlocked the door and nudged it open with one boot. She had expected blasterfire, an enemy's cackle, or the smooth sounds of a jatz band and a fool's compliments, but what she got was utter silence. Slipping a small mirror from one of her pockets, she used it to scout the room through the open door.

A lone figure sat on the disheveled bed, utterly still. Even in the low light, she could tell it was a protocol droid, and not one of the new, fancy ones. This one was skeletal and missing an arm, the barest sketch of a sentient being. The rest of the room was slightly off, towels on the floor and chairs askew, as if the person who'd left her the key had done so on his or her way out.

"Hello?" she called, voice pitched low to sound inviting.

There was no answer. She didn't know if she was more intrigued or annoyed. Sure, she'd been bored in the bar and waiting for a mission, but she preferred her work like she preferred her clothes: tidy, no nonsense, a good fit, and ready to burn if she had to run.

She slipped the mirror back in its pocket and took up her blade. Both weapons drawn, she stepped into the room, ready for the worst.

The rusty protocol droid's head slowly ratcheted up to scan her face.

"Greetings, Bazine Netal," it said in a dull, heartless monotone. "I have a job for you. Do you accept?"

Bazine didn't answer immediately. She was waiting for further details. What she got was a countdown.

"Ten. Nine. Eight."

She moved closer to the droid and waved her blaster. "Stop. Tell me more."

The droid stood, a painful, squealing affair.

"Accept or reject. Seven. Six."

In Bazine's experience, any countdown that began at ten and ended with zero involved an explosion. She had exactly six seconds to decide which was more dangerous: taking an unknown job from an unidentified source delivered



in a singular manner, or waiting to see how much an exploding rustbucket droid could damage the cantina—and just how much of a hit her armor could take. “Five. Four. Three.”

“Fine. I’ll take the job. I accept. Just shut up with the counting.”

The droid went silent and sat down heavily on the bed as if the act of formulating an answer were exhausting. “Your acceptance has been recorded. Stand by.” With a whir and a shudder, the droid projected a shaky hologram to hover a meter in front of Bazine’s face. The figure was cloaked, naturally, and its voice was so well modulated that Bazine couldn’t guess at its species, age, or gender.

“Bazine Netal. You will retrieve a steel case last possessed by Imperial stormtrooper TK-1472. Human name: Jor Tribulus. Tribulus was most recently documented as a patient at Vashka City Medcenter One. His records are stored in the facility’s data banks under the highest level of encryption. Current whereabouts unknown, but we suspect he remains on Vashka, possibly suffering from psychological instability. Retrieve the case and send an encrypted message on this device using the provided main planetary booster.”

The droid’s arm swung out, rusted fingers creaking open to reveal a comm so slender and high-tech, it would’ve more than paid for the average job, even one that took her offworld. Bazine’s eyes narrowed.

“What’s the pay?”

The holographic figure paused as if it could hear her, even though it was obviously a recording. “You’ll be curious about the payout. Deliver this case, and you won’t have to work again.” She frowned, and the figure chuckled darkly. “But you will anyway, won’t you? Old habits die hard. You may keep the comm.”

The hologram ended, and the figure disappeared.

Bazine took the comm, sliding it into place behind her ear.

“One more thing, Ms. Netal,” the voice whispered, sharp and clear through the speaker. “There is another

faction hunting for the case. Your adversary will be cunning and likewise well appointed, known only by the code name Narglatch. Remain undetected, and get rid of anyone who opposes you. We’ll cover your tracks. Good luck.” She was about to tell the voice where it could shove its Narglatch, but it added, almost too low to hear, “Oh, yes. And the droid will self-destruct in thirty seconds.”

Considering that Suli’s cantina was the basis of her current operations on Chaakti, she wasn’t willing to assume that the droid’s self-destruct mechanism would be a small, self-limited affair via EM grenade. Grabbing it by the remaining arm, she spun in a circle, lobbing the pile of rusted metal toward the window with all her strength. The cheap glass shattered as the droid plunged to the dark, empty street. Bazine followed it out the window, scuttled down a drainpipe, and took off.

By the time the explosion lit up the night, she was running full-tilt on her way to the spaceport, leaving nothing behind but a discarded black wig.

Whoever her new employer was, they were very... dramatic. ☹

MORE TO SAY

Star Wars: The Perfect Weapon by Delilah S. Dawson is now available as an ebook by Del Rey.

HAVE YOU?





**SIMON PEGG ON BEING A
LIFELONG *STAR WARS*FAN
AND PLAYING UNKAR PLUTT
IN *STAR WARS: THE
FORCE AWAKENS*!**



FROM FAN TO FAR, FAR AWAY!

ON GETTING THE ROLE OF UNKAR PLUTT...

I've done five films with J.J. Abrams; one with him as a producer. When I heard he was doing *Star Wars*, I was immediately on the phone to him, because as a *Star Trek* alumnus, I was kind of concerned with what was going to happen. I thought maybe I could be a voice or something because being in it as me with my face would be a little too meta. I imagine people

would think, *Uh, it's him from Star Trek*, and my own conscience was saying that might spoil it. Then we discussed the idea of me playing a character that was in full prosthetic makeup, which meant I could have my space cake and eat it.

ON A LIFELONG LOVE OF *STAR WARS*...

It starts about 37 years ago for me when I first saw *Star Wars*; it pretty much changed my life completely. It shaped my childhood in terms of what I was interested in and engendered the love of film that I have, and my career is a result of that. So really I have to thank *Star Wars* for putting me here in a way, because it's what fueled my imagination and got me interested in this business.

ON SUITING UP FOR *STAR WARS*...

We did all the close-up work at Pinewood because the mask had to be glued to my face, so the articulation was there. We couldn't do that in Abu Dhabi because of the heat, so we used the pull-over mask, which is nevertheless still as much rubber. Then there's sort of a fat suit and rubber gloves. It was extremely hot and worryingly, at times, claustrophobic. My heart rate would go up a little bit and I would just have to keep going, "It's *Star Wars*! It's *Star Wars*!" But this is what you do. You get into ridiculous outfits and makeups and you suffer because it's so much better if it's real, if you're there, and if it's a genuine thing that is interacting with actors, not just a digital creation. So I was prepared to suffer without complaint as I melted inside this silicone prison!

ON BEING AN ON-SET STAR WARS EXPERT...

It's funny having conversations with people about what-happened-when because I'm pretty good with my *Star Wars* knowledge. Every now and again, I'll get asked about something and I'm able to go, "Well, actually, I think you'll find in *The Empire Strikes Back* that..." It's a place where you can just wield that nerdiness with pride.

ON BEING IMPRESSED BY THE CREATURES...

Yes. Amazing stuff. I love the fact that they got in some of the guys from *War Horse* to do some of the puppeteering. Physical must never be let go of. CG is a wonderful tool but it has its place; it shouldn't do everything. Once it starts doing everything, the film will become a cartoon. Whereas if you use real stuff that actors can interact with and be there with, there's a feeling of proximity and jeopardy that you cannot achieve with CG entirely. So it's wonderful to see all this stuff being made.

Neal Scanlan, the creature effects supervisor, is extraordinary. I remember when we were out in Abu Dhabi and they built this little thing that comes out of the sand and looks like a classic *Star Wars* creature. It's on a sort of hydraulic and then it goes back down, and I just remember thinking, these guys are having a blast on this. I would bet that the vast majority of people working on this in physical effects were inspired by *Star Wars*.

ON THE CRUCIAL ELEMENTS...

The main part of J.J.'s mission statement about making these movies was to continue what the first three films set up. This film is the sequel to *Return of the Jedi*, obviously. The prequels happened before the first three films in terms of the chronology. So this film has to feel like an extension of Episode VI. To do that, J.J. has gone to

great lengths in terms of how he's shooting the movie, in terms of shooting on film, the music, and the design.

He wants it to feel like part of that universe, part of that series, and not something separate. Being part of it, you feel that straight away. You know what this is and I think when you watch the movies they will feel very much like *Star Wars*. You will see that in the physical effects element, the practical sets, the makeups and the masks. All these things are present and that makes a huge difference. When you see computer-generated stuff, if it's obviously computer generated, it stops you from thinking about how they did it because you have an abstract idea of how they do that. Someone does this in a room and then that appears. That is somehow less awe inspiring and less impressive than seeing a real, full-size *Millennium Falcon* sitting in a forest. I think that's what J.J. completely gets in terms of what makes *Star Wars* amazing.



"IT'S MY
CHILDHOOD DREAM
REALIZED. THIS IS
ME WITHIN THE
ENVIRONMENT THAT
MADE ME WANT TO
BE AN ACTOR"



ON DIRECTOR J.J. ABRAMS...

J.J.'s from the right generation. He's a man who was inspired by it and who grew up on it. Like me, he was the right age when it came out; we were its absolute target audience. He understands it fully. He understands it as a fan as well as a creative. He's just absolutely the right man for the job. As well as that, you have someone who, on set, is a complete delight to work with. He's very, very keen. His sets are happy productive places where everybody is inspired and active and involved and he does that by leading from the head down. J.J. sets an incredible example on set. You're always in no doubt that this is a fun place but it's a place of hard work, and that's really important when you're filmmaking. It should never be too serious; it should never be arduous and it should never be easy. J.J. totally has exactly the right approach to filmmaking and that's what's needed to make this film.

ON A DREAM COME TRUE....

There's not a register that it can possibly be measured on. It's my childhood dream realized. This is me within the environment that made me want to be a film actor. It doesn't get any cooler than that. To be able to hug Chewie and lean on R2-D2, and talk to Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill—these are the things that I dreamt of as a kid. I use to fantasize about getting to do that stuff and here I am doing it. It's not lost on me, I assure you, by any means. I pinch myself on a daily basis and not for fun. 🍷

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THE LATEST FROM THE WORLD OF *STAR WARS* PUBLISHING! WORDS: DAN WALLACE

THERE HAS BEEN AN AWAKENING

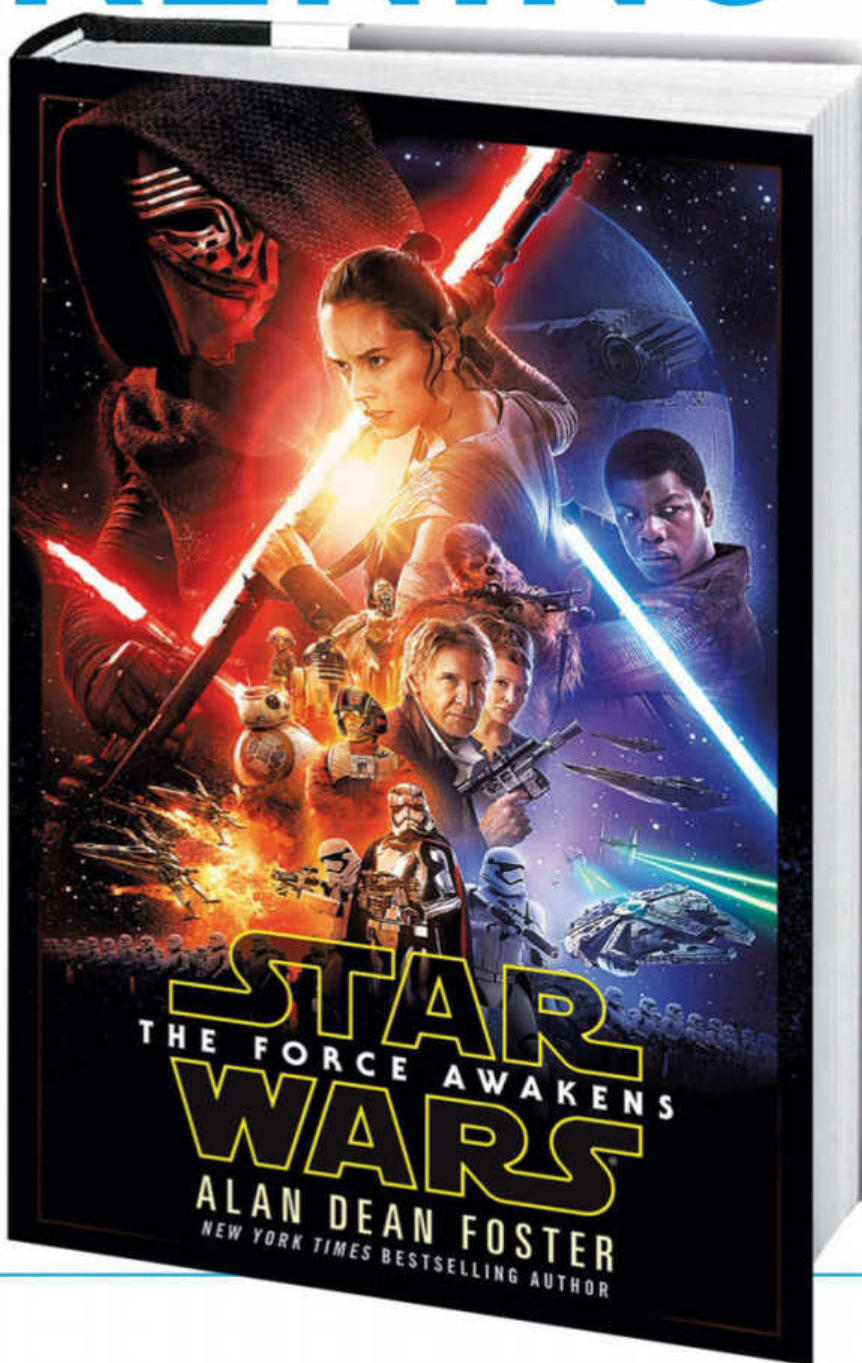
THE HARDCOVER NOVELIZATION OF *STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS* IS HERE!

S*tar Wars: The Force Awakens* has jolted global pop culture like a zap from an astromech's welding arm, smashing box office records since its debut in theaters on December 18. Old fans and new fans have fallen in love with Finn, Rey, BB-8, and the rest of the newcomers, and have enjoyed the chance to spend time with classic characters from the original trilogy. But as any fan of movie novelizations knows, there's more to any story than what you see on the screen.

Nearly 40 years ago, in December of 1976, Alan Dean Foster wrote the first novelization of *Star Wars* from George Lucas' screenplay. Foster kept connected to the galaxy far, far away. In 1978, he kicked off an era of *Star Wars* spinoff fiction with *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, and in 2002 he delivered the Anakin/Obi-Wan adventure *Star Wars: The Approaching Storm*.

Now Foster brings the saga full circle, penning the novelization to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*—bookending the seven-episode saga as it currently exists. Foster's novelization appeared in ebook format on December 18 in conjunction with the release of the film, but the hardcover edition took a little more time to get ready. In addition to the bookshelf beauty of the hardcover packaging itself, the book comes with a few extra items to make it worth the wait. In a move that harkens back to the publishing era of the 1970s, an 8-page color photo insert features images from the film. Fans who seek out an exclusive special edition—only available from Barnes & Noble—will find a second 8-page photo insert, for 16 photo pages in all.

The hardcover novelization of *The Force Awakens* is available now. Get details you might have missed in the theater, and relive the adventure!



GET WILD

ADVENTURES IN WILD SPACE IS A NEW STAR WARS SERIES FOR JUNIOR READERS

An all-new series of junior novels is set to debut in the UK, exploring the dangers that lurk at the fringes of the civilized galaxy. *Adventures in Wild Space: The Escape*, by Cavan Scott, is a special prequel to the series, publishing on February 25 in conjunction with the 2016 World Book Day.

Milo and Lina Graf are the children of frontier explorers, who find themselves caught up in an adventure beyond their understanding when their parents are kidnapped by agents of the Galactic Empire. *The Escape* tells the story of the capture, which left Milo and Lina on a remote planet and sets in motion their bold plan to track the Empire across the uncharted expanse of Wild Space.

In partnership with schools all over the UK, World Book Day distributes more than 14 million £1 book tokens to children in the UK and Ireland. These are redeemable at local bookshops for £1 World Book Day books, including *The Escape*.



Adventures in Wild Space truly begins in March with *The Snare*, the first book in the series. On the planet Thune, Milo and Lina hope to pick up their parents' trail, but the villainous Captain Korda gets there first and has laid a trap to catch meddlers.



Adventures in Wild Space: The Nest continues the series. Milo and Lina follow a mysterious signal to a jungle planet. The world is owned by a ruthless big game hunter, and something terrifying is lying in wait for them in the jungle depths.

BOSSK'S BOUNTY

LIFT THE FLAPS AS YOU EXPLORE STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNT

Coming this spring from Egmont UK, *Star Wars: Bounty Hunt* stars Bossk—the reptilian bounty hunter who made his first appearance in *The Empire Strikes Back*—on a quest to track down a fugitive. Discover secrets on each spread, with flaps that lift to reveal new layers of information. Follow the clues and help Bossk nab his target!

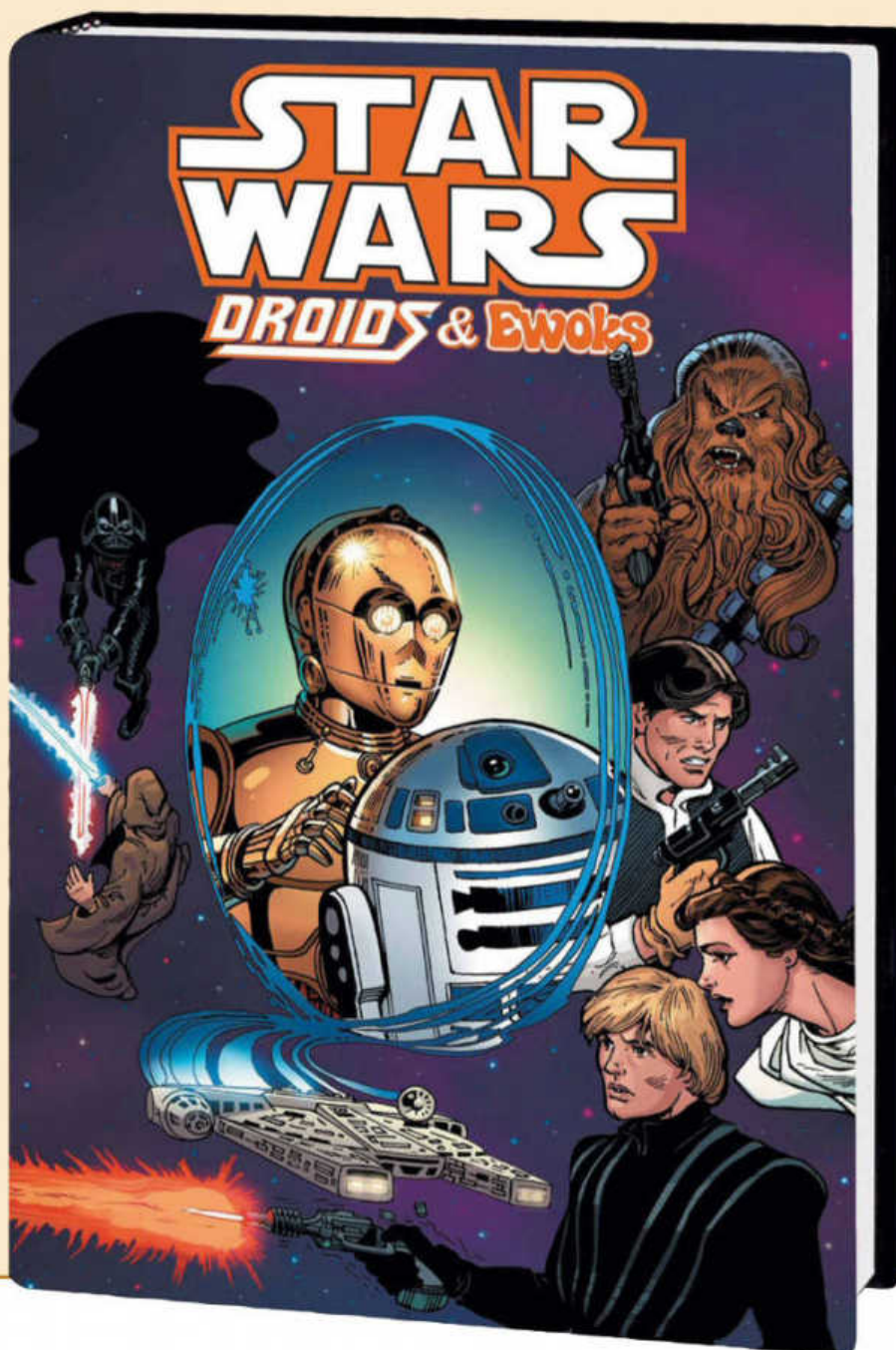


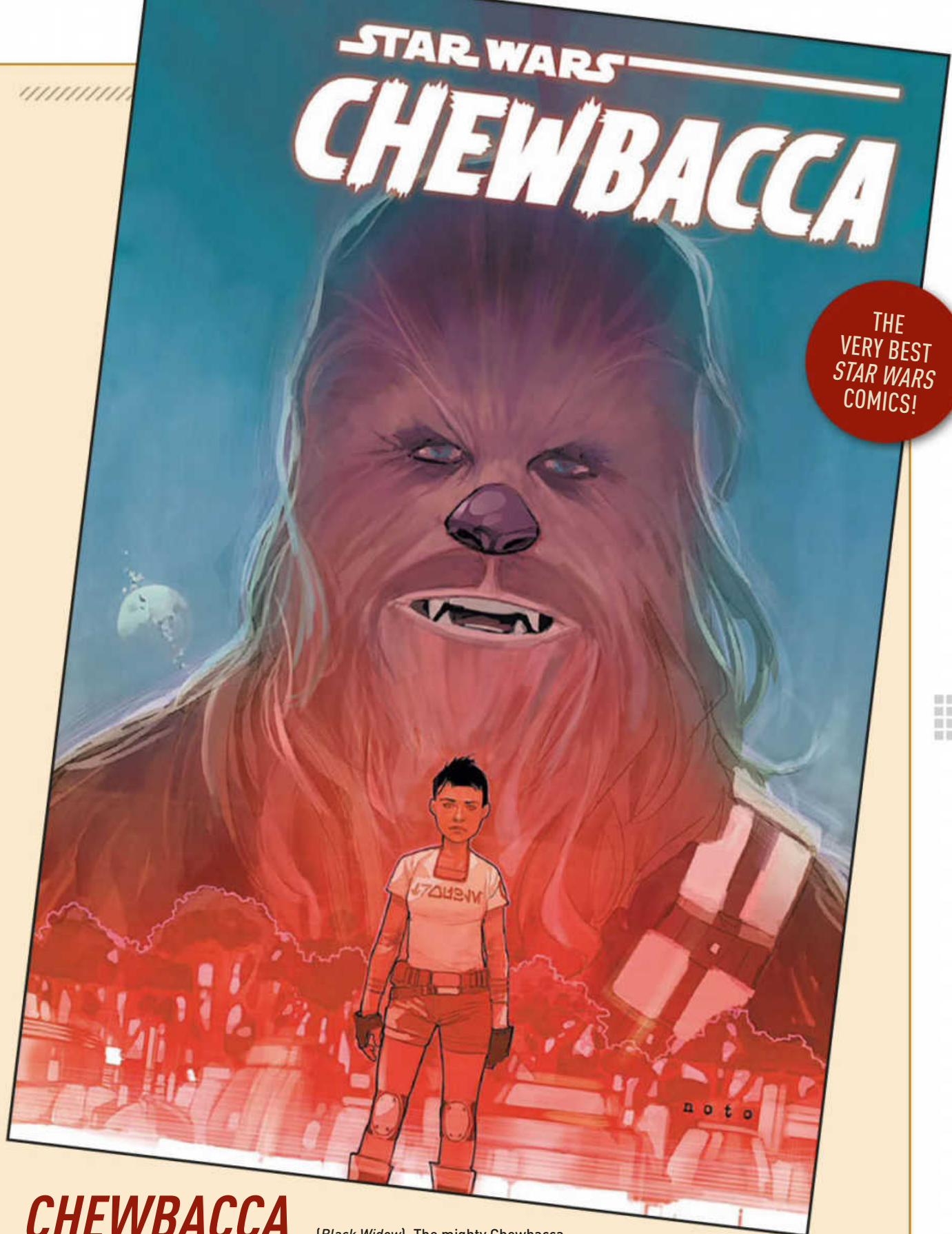
MORE FOR YOUR CREDITS!

Marvel's *Star Wars* comics have continued the official story of the Rebel Alliance's struggle against the Empire. Meanwhile, Marvel's reprint collections have helped restore older *Star Wars* comics and make them available to a new generation of readers. Two new volumes keep both traditions alive in style.

STAR WARS: DROIDS & EWOKS OMNIBUS

Back in the late 1980s, R2-D2 and C-3PO starred in their own kid-friendly comic, sold alongside a similar title starring Wicket the Ewok and his friends Teebo and Princess Kneesaa. Those original *Droids* and *Ewoks* comics are tough to find today, making Marvel's decision to release the full runs in a deluxe hardcover format a welcome one. With stories written by David Manak and George Garagonne, and artists including John Romita Sr. and Ernie Colon, this all-ages collection is a double dose of lighthearted fun and vintage nostalgia. The 536-page hardcover collects *Ewoks* #1-14, *Droids* #1-8, and *Ewoks* UK Annual 1989.





CHEWBACCA

This trade paperback collects all five issues of the original limited series by writer Gerry Duggan (*Deadpool*) and artist Phil Noto

(*Black Widow*). The mighty Chewbacca stars in a never-before-seen adventure set shortly after the destruction of the first Death Star. When the fan-favorite Wookiee warrior crash lands on an Imperial-held planet, a young girl

becomes his greatest ally in helping him get home and simultaneously striking a blow against the Empire's occupiers. This 112-page collection is available from February 24.

LOST YEARS

EXPERIENCE AN UNTOLD CHAPTER OF *STAR WARS* HISTORY IN
Obi-Wan and Anakin

When Qui-Gon Jinn passed away at the end of *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace*, Obi-Wan Kenobi promised his dying Master that he would train Anakin Skywalker as his Jedi Padawan. In the next movie, ten years had gone by. So what happened in the meantime? That's the question that the new limited series *Obi-Wan and Anakin* sets out to answer. In this adventure by writer Charles Soule (*Star Wars: Lando*) and artist Marco Checchetto (*Star Wars: Shattered Empire*), Anakin has a few years of Jedi training under his belt but still has a lot to learn. When he and Obi-Wan are called upon to assist the people of a remote planet, their relationship is pushed to breaking point.

"Anakin is about 12 or 13 years old at this point," Soule explained to Marvel.com. "His skills have advanced rapidly, and he's a tough kid—I mean, he was born into slavery on Tatooine—and so he brings a certain perspective to the world that most of the other Padawans don't really share. Then we have Obi-Wan Kenobi. He didn't really know what he was getting into, and Anakin is not the easiest student, especially at this age. I think that's a pretty rich place from which to build a story, especially since we know the tragic place where it all ends up."

For Checchetto, illustrating movie characters like Obi-Wan and Anakin is a distinctly different challenge than rendering super heroes and other comic book characters. "Super heroes are born on paper without a specific face, but *Star Wars* was born on the big screen," he says. "The readers of the *Star Wars* comic books know Han Solo very well, and he has Harrison Ford's face. The hard part is being able to make the actors recognizable and keep your art style so they are integrated with everything else, like stormtroopers, aliens, ships, and environments."

That goes double for a character like Anakin, who at the time of this



series falls somewhere between the Jake Lloyd of Episode I and the Hayden Christensen of Episode II. "At first, I tried to do a younger version of Hayden Christensen," Checchetto says. "But the result wasn't satisfying to me, and it would have been difficult to replicate it on each page. So I created a hybrid version of Anakin." Explains Soule, "Anakin and Obi-Wan are both at a point in this story where they are asking serious questions about their path going forward. I'm writing Obi-Wan in more of a samurai archetype; he is very controlled, and incredibly skilled. Anakin, on the other hand, is power without wisdom, like a little tiger cub that can also do magic and has a laser sword that can cut through anything. They're a volatile mix."

The five-issue run of *Obi-Wan and Anakin* tells two

parallel stories: the present-day mission to a mysterious planet ravaged by an apocalyptic war, and a series of flashbacks explaining how Obi-Wan and Anakin forged their current bond as teacher and student. "The mystery of what's on that world and how they get through it should hopefully feel

both familiar and fresh," says Soule. "There's almost a steampunk element to it, plus lots of bizarre creatures. I'm a huge fan of post-apocalyptic stories [and] I would say this story has things in common with tales like that. It's a neat place to put *Star Wars* characters."

"We are building a new world for this series," adds Checchetto. "I'm a realistic penciler, so it's important for me that it's all believable. The best thing is that everything will be new. It's a great challenge." And as for the flashback tale? Much of it is set in the Jedi Temple on Coruscant, with guest appearances by Supreme Chancellor Palpatine and members of the Jedi Council. "I felt it was important to show something of what it was like for Anakin in the Temple as a young person," says Soule. "I love writing *Star Wars* characters, and it's fun to feel their voices locking in."



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GENTLE GIANT

FIRST ORDER STORMTROOPER MINI BUST

Gentle Giant Ltd's first mini bust from *The Force Awakens* is the First Order Stormtrooper. This piece has been designed, modeled and prototyped using the best 3D technology available. Each bust is hand cast, painted and numbered and comes with a matching certificate of authenticity.

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CLASSIC MINI BUSTS

New Classic 1:6 Scale Mini Busts featuring favorite characters from the *Star Wars* galaxy in brand new poses are available now. The first new characters in this new line are Darth Vader as depicted in *Star Wars: Episode V The Empire Strikes Back* and a stormtrooper from *Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope*.

Each Classic Mini Bust combines the most recognizable characters from popular culture with the timeless aesthetics from Greek and Roman antiquity. Each piece is hand painted, comes individually numbered and is paired with a matching certificate of authenticity.

Available: Now
Price: \$60 each (Darth Vader is a Gamestop Exclusive)

STAR WARS LOGO BOOKENDS

Gentle Giant Ltd/3D Systems plays homage to the iconic *Star Wars* logo with a set of bookends featuring the familiar yellow lettering with black border. This will make a great addition to your bookshelf, Blu-ray/DVD collection or just as a display piece.

Available: Q1 2016
Price: \$60



FUNKO

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

Funko turns its hands to *The Force Awakens* and gives the film's characters the Pop! Vinyl treatment. Initial characters include Rey, BB-8, Kylo Ren, First Order Stormtrooper, C-3PO, Poe Dameron, Chewbacca, Captain Phasma, First Order Flametrooper and First Order Snowtrooper (not all shown). Each figure comes individually boxed and there's more to come in 2016.

Available: Now
Price: \$10.99 each



KOTOBUKIYA

CAPTAIN PHASMA

Captain Phasma continues the range of 1:10 scale ARTFX+ characters from *The Force Awakens*. Phasma stands 20cm tall, can be posed in two different ways, and comes with various parts. The model snaps together easily, without the need for glue or painting, and comes complete with a base that attaches magnetically for added stability.

Available: Q1 2016

Price: \$59.99



QMX



KEY FOBs

QMX have released two new key fobs that allow you to pick your allegiance to either Emperor Palpatine with the Imperial emblem, or the Alliance Starbird as a symbol of hope for the Rebel Alliance. Both key fobs measure 3.5" long and 1.62" wide, and are made from zinc alloy with simulated leather.

Available: Now

Price: From \$9.95 each

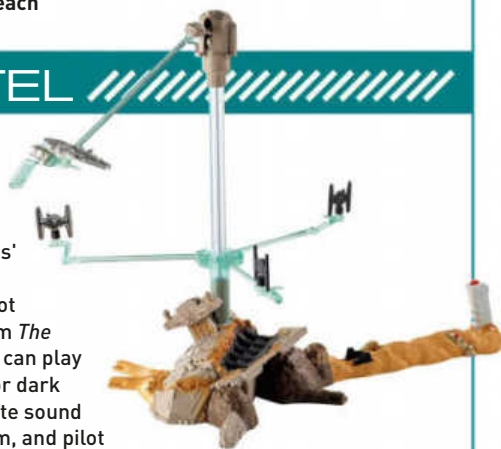
MATTEL

HOT WHEELS ESCAPE FROM JAKKU PLAYSET

Recreate our heroes' daring escape from Jakku in the new Hot Wheels playset from *The Force Awakens*. You can play as either the light or dark side with appropriate sound effects from the film, and pilot the ship around the 360-degree loop using the controller. The playset comes with a die-cast *Millennium Falcon* and three TIE fighters with the ability to add your own starships, too.

Available: Now

Price: \$49.99



HOT WHEELS R/C DARTH VADER VEHICLE

The Hot Wheels Darth Vader car from Mattel was a huge hit when first shown at Comic-Con International: San Diego last year, and now you can drive your own! The smaller version of the life-sized Darth Vader car is fully controllable by remote control and features lights and sound.

Available: Now

Price: \$29.99



HER UNIVERSE

The Force Awakens is out and breaking records, and you can wear your favorite characters from the film in a variety of designs from Ashley Eckstein and Her Universe. The new range features something for every female fan with tank tops featuring BB-8, Troop Leader & Rey, new dresses featuring BB-8 & Rey, a BB-8 inspired jacket, sweatshirts in black and grey with the film's logo, a First Order Stormtrooper skirt, children's tees with Rey and finally a sweatshirt with patches of Darth Vader and both old and new Stormtroopers. New designs are being added regularly so keep checking the Her Universe website. Available: Now Price: \$20 - \$50



BLADEZ TOYZ



BB-8

Bladez Toyz follows up its hugely successful Radio Controlled Inflatable R2-D2 with the popular droid from *The Force Awakens*—BB-8. The Radio Controlled Inflatable BB-8 includes its own unique and original motion activated sound effects, and can be driven in all directions both indoors and outdoors!

Available: Now
Price: \$49.99

YOMEGA



BATTLE BALLERZ

We first saw Battle Ballerz at the U.S. Toy Fair earlier this year and we were immediately hooked. Each character comes with a removable, high-bounce ball which doubles as the character's head. Lots of new Battle Ballerz are coming from Yomega featuring characters from Episodes I-VI and *The Force Awakens*. Available: Q1 2016 Price: \$9.99 each

THE FORCE AWAKENS ALPHA WING YOYOS

The Alpha Wing Yoyo is wing-shaped and perfect for tricks. The series features BB-8, Captain Phasma, and Kylo Ren from *The Force Awakens*. Available: Now Price: \$5.99 each



THE FORCE AWAKENS YO MEN

Yomega continue its range of Yo Men yoyos with their first series inspired by *The Force Awakens*. Each of the exclusive performance yoyos comes with an action stand body to show off the character. The first series includes Poe Dameron, Resistance Trooper Finn, Captain Phasma, and Kylo Ren.

Available: Q1 2016
Price: \$14.99 each





X-WING WAVE VIII

Slip past Imperial blockades, blast out of the shadows, and spark a rebellion... The *Ghost* and its crew arrive to *X-Wing* as part of the game's eighth wave of starship expansions! Full of fantastic secrets and surprising skills, as well as powerful technological tools, Wave VIII introduces five new starships divided between its four different expansions:

- The Rebellion's *Ghost Expansion Pack* introduces both the *Ghost* and the *Phantom*, along with pilots and crew representing the heroic protagonists of *Star Wars Rebels*.
 - Meanwhile, the crew of the *Ghost* will have to contend with one of their greatest nemeses, as the Inquisitor lends his strength, his skills, and his TIE Advanced prototype to the Imperial Navy with the *Inquisitor's TIE Expansion Pack*.
 - The galaxy's Scum and Villainy get into the action, too, as they retain the services of the renowned bounty hunters Zuckuss, 4-LOM, and Dengar in the *Mist Hunter Expansion Pack* and *Punishing One Expansion Pack*.
- What is there in Wave VIII that's worth getting excited about? How about thermal detonators, tractor beams, illicit cloaking devices, new systems upgrades, and zero-cost elite pilot talents? Plus, there's more than a dozen unique pilots, crew members, and ship titles with a rich variety of thematic abilities to make this one of the most flavorful waves of *X-Wing* yet!

Available: Now



STAR WARS: REBELLION

Experience the Galactic Civil War like never before, in *Star Wars: Rebellion*, a board game of epic conflict between the Galactic Empire and Rebel Alliance for two to four players! In *Star Wars: Rebellion*, you control the entire Galactic Empire or the fledgling Rebel Alliance. You must command starships, account for troop movements, and rally systems to your cause. Featuring more than 150 plastic miniature game pieces and two game boards that account for thirty-two of the *Star Wars* galaxy's most notable systems, *Star Wars: Rebellion* features a scope that is as large and sweeping as any *Star Wars* game before it.

Yet for all its grandiosity, *Star Wars: Rebellion* remains intensely personal, cinematic, and heroic. As much as your success depends upon the strength of your starships, vehicles, and troops, it depends upon the individual efforts of characters such as Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Princess Leia, Darth Vader, and Emperor Palpatine. As civil war spreads throughout the galaxy, these leaders are vital to your efforts, and the secret missions they attempt will evoke many of the most inspiring moments from the classic trilogy, even as you explore your own saga within the *Star Wars* universe!

Available: Now

Price: From \$99.95

CARTAMUNDI //

Cartamundi bring us its first products from *The Force Awakens*!

RESISTANCE VS FIRST ORDER PLAYING CARDS

This deck of playing cards from *The Force Awakens* features the heroes of the Resistance against the villains of the First Order. Available now in an embossed collectible tin, as well as a standard box.

Available: Now



VILLAINS PLAYING CARDS

The *Villains* deck of playing cards from *The Force Awakens* is available in an exclusive First Order Stormtrooper helmet as well as a regular box, and features Stormtroopers along with their commander Kylo Ren.

Available: Now



HASBRO



MICRO MACHINES WAVE 3

Series 3 of Micro Machines is out now and features vehicles and creatures from the complete saga including *The Force Awakens*. There are 12 to collect in series 3 and each blind bag contains one vehicle or creature—trade with your friends to complete the set.

Available: Now
Price: \$2.99



12" FIGURES

Hasbro continues its range of 12" action figures from *The Force Awakens* with two new releases, first revealed at 'Twas the Night Before Party at New York Comic Con in October. BB-8 is a much-anticipated figure and comes with a range of accessories, and we can't wait to see how these are used in the film. The second new release is Rey with an amazing face sculpt which is based on the same scans used in the 6" scale Black Series figure to ensure accuracy. Both figures are in scale and include accessories.

Available: Q1 2016
Price: \$9.99 each



PLAYING CARD COLLECTOR'S SET

This *Collector's Set* comes in an embossed collectible tin and features a total of 7 decks of playing cards along with 5 dice. Each of the 7 decks features stills from each of the films from Episode I through to Episode VII.

Available: Now

KYLO REN PLAYING CARDS

The Kylo Ren deck of playing cards features the dark warrior with his unconventional lightsaber. The deck is available in an embossed collectible tin and also a standard box.

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BANTHA TRACKS

BY THE FANS.
FOR THE FANS.



THERE HAS BEEN AN AWAKENING CAN YOU FEEL IT?

Since the last issue, it seems there's been an awakening of *The Force Awakens*-related photo and artwork submissions to *Bantha Tracks*! Check out the following pages for some great TFA-inspired costumes, artwork, and collections.

Los Angeles World Premiere,
December 14, 2015

As I'm writing this column from my hotel room on the eve of the world premiere of *The Force Awakens* in Los Angeles, I can almost feel the seismic vibrations of excitement (tremors in the Force or a small earthquake?) rising from the street below—and not just any old street, mind you, but Hollywood Boulevard, home of the three theaters that will be screening the premiere simultaneously: the El Capitan, the Chinese Theater, and the Dolby Theater. While plans for the premiere are super-secret and decidedly need-to-know (meaning I barely know anything), the fact that this column will print a few days after the premiere allows me to share what I know (and hopefully some of this will still be news by the time you read it).

Because I'm in the unique position to report on the fan presence planned for the premiere, here's the skinny on what fans can expect tomorrow:

230 fans (28 in TFA-inspired costumes and 202 sporting their finest *Star Wars* chic) will witness the spectacle on the red carpet from a bleacher section located at the



↑ *The Force Awakens* World Premiere sign stands ready to be hung to welcome guests to the lavish red carpeted event in Los Angeles on December 14.

entry point. Of course, we wish we could invite all *Star Wars* fans to what will certainly be the premiere of the year, but due to the timing of invitations (for security reasons), we could invite only those fans who we knew would be able to attend without having to book last-minute travel, hotel, etc, which could be prohibitively expensive. The majority of tickets, therefore, went to regional fan groups such as the local 501st Legion, Rebel Legion, Mandalorian Mercs, Saber Guild, *Star Wars* Steampunk Universe and a few others. Those fans have all been told to keep the invitations under their helmets, which no doubt is forcing a few to power down their social activities to avoid temptation.

The plan is for all the fans to meet up at the Hollywood Bowl parking lot (another venue with a bit of *Star Wars* history given

the multiple *Star Wars* concerts that have been staged there) and shuttled to the venue, with those costumed fans boarding the first shuttle to allow them extra time to suit up. They will be occupying the front row of a special bleacher section designated for all 230 fans, optimum positioning to see and interact with the celebs as they enter the red carpet. Following the arrivals of the celebs and filmmakers, the fans will be escorted to one of three theaters showing the film simultaneously, including the new spiritual home of *Star Wars* premieres, Disney's El Capitan, as well as the original Chinese Theater, and Dolby Theater, the former of which famously hosted one of

the opening day screenings of the original *Star Wars* on May 25, 1977.

Following the screening will be a reception to take place within the tented red carpet spanning the length of several blocks, and filled with spectacles galore, from original screen-used costumes to photo-ops with characters and interactive activities—and of course the opportunity to rub elbows with the film's cast and crew. Around midnight the event is to wind down, sending what I hope are at least a couple hundred fans home with a whole new *Star Wars* adventure to process (and keep secret for three days—ah, the burdens of fandom).

Yours in the Force!

Pete Vilmur, *Bantha Tracks* editor

GET IN TRACKS!



↑ A drizzly night fails to dampen the pageantry of what is to come when the main entrance to the blocks-long red carpet opens to guests the following day.

↓ The fan bleachers which lined the entrance to the red carpet go up.



↑ Even a day before opening to guests, the interior of the tented red carpet spanning a length of Hollywood Blvd. was effectively otherworldly and dramatic in its scope.

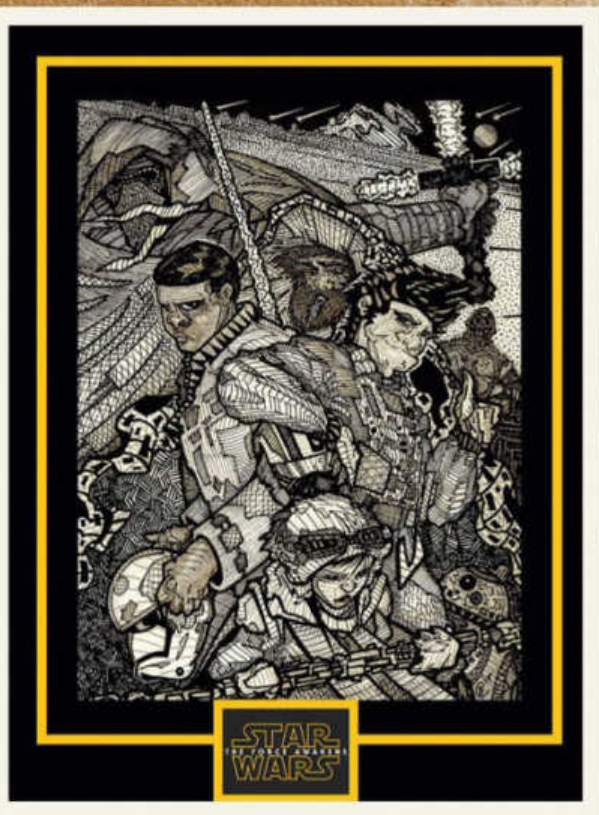


One of the founders of the BB-8 Builders Club (an offshoot of the R2 Builders Club), Carl Cunningham poses with his collection of everything BB-8, which also happens to be the name of his Facebook group: "Everything BB-8 started as a Facebook Group in April 2015 as a place to share photos and stories as well as news and information on collectibles, artwork and other miscellaneous things related to the fan-favorite new *Star Wars* droid, BB-8!"



"This is the first time Halloween came before the release of a new *Star Wars* movie, so these costumes were based on the limited footage of the trailers," says Alex Chen. "We tried to pose based on that limited footage as well as used our own imagination."

Jorge Colón from Puerto Rico created an outstanding artwork of Rey and BB-8 with wood burning and acrylic paint on a big slab of "capá prieto" wood. It is almost 6' tall!



↑ Stunning and highly stylized ink drawing of *The Force Awakens* by New Hampshire fan Ben Foster.



↑ Jeff Parks submitted this photo of daughters Riley and her friend Kiley from the recent Long Beach Comic Con. (Photo by Brandon Jackson)



↙ Members of the Texas Garrison of the 501st Legion visited super-fan Daniel Fleetwood after he received a rare first viewing of *The Force Awakens* at his home. *Star Wars* fans were saddened to learn that Daniel passed away from cancer just a few days later.

↓ Members from Rebel Legion's Sunrider Base in Southern California attend a *Star Wars* Reads Day event in October. Members include Brandon Jackson as Finn, Dawn Bright as Rey, and a Kylo Ren whose identity for now shall remain safely anonymous.



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RED FIVE

ALEXANDER FREED'S FIVE FAVORITE STAR WARS SOLDIERS

THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED NOVEL *STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT: TWILIGHT COMPANY* PUT READERS ON THE FRONTLINE. WHO WOULD THE BOOK'S AUTHOR, ALEXANDER FREED, CHOOSE TO SERVE WITH?



1

TK-421



I know, I know. "TK-421?" you're asking. "Seriously?" Let me explain!

Sitting down to figure out my top five *Star Wars* soldiers, I knew I was facing a challenge. Despite being filled with armies and ground battles and raids on enemy bases, *Star Wars* has always focused on pilots and irregulars and Jedi and lone wolves over trained women and men with guns. In the original films, soldiers are faceless stormtroopers, background strike team members, and victims dying in the snow on Hoth.

Now, *Star Wars* has done a lot with soldiers since the original movies.

Knowing I wanted a stormtrooper on my list, I could've looked to sources like Garth Ennis's short comic story *Trooper* or John Ostrander's *Star Wars: Legacy* comics. And maybe there are more worthy stormtroopers than TK-421—the poor fellow who was dispatched offscreen aboard the *Millennium Falcon* during the rescue of Princess Leia—but TK-421 was the first to have a name, and surely he deserves a memorial of sorts? What were his (or her?) hopes and dreams? We may never know!

So here's to you, TK-421. We'll always remember how you weren't at your post.

2

ARC-77



The *Star Wars: Clone Wars* animated shorts depicted soldiers in the franchise in a way they'd never been seen before. The clone troopers depicted therein weren't faceless cannon fodder. Oh, the "faceless" part was still true, sure—but they had personality, and they moved with heroic freneticism, charging and blasting and moving with their squadmates in the larger-than-life fashion we'd only ever seen from Jedi and Sith. *Star Wars: Clone Wars* made the clones cool.

ARC-77, a.k.a. "Fordo" a.k.a. "That awesome clone in the armor with red highlights" led his Advanced Recon Commando troops to victory alongside Jedi and stood face-to-face with General Grievous. The truth is, I don't remember him for his professional affect or occasional sly flourish—I remember him for introducing a fresh approach to *Star Wars* combat.



3

REX

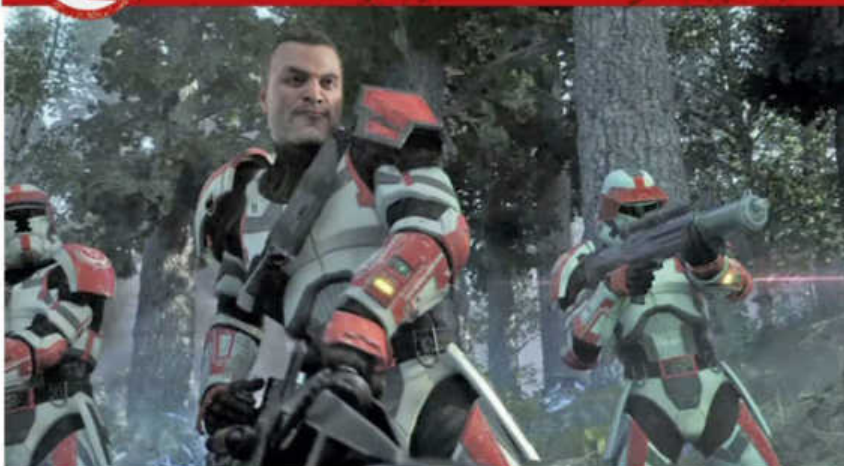
If ARC-77 is the style, Rex (or CT-7567) is the substance. Rex's story—as chronicled in *The Clone Wars* and *Star Wars Rebels*—is the classic *Star Wars* journey as filtered through the life of a clone. We see Rex evolve over a period of years, going from a template soldier to an individual who cares about his friends—both clone and non-clone—and develops a bond with Anakin Skywalker and Ahsoka Tano. (And how delightful is it to see a clone trooper, bred for war and destruction, mentor a teenage Jedi?)

And as with so many great *Star Wars* characters, Rex carries a dark legacy but overcomes it in the end. Built, like all the clones, by Palpatine

to destroy the Jedi and aid in his conquest, Rex instead escapes participation in Order 66. There are a thousand stories that can be told about the Clone Army. But Rex's story was the one that *Star Wars* needed to showcase the triumph and tragedy of those troopers.

4

THE HAVOC SQUAD COMMANDER



The commander of Havoc Squad can epitomize the Republic's ideals or serve as their ruthless, underhanded protector. She or he can take bribes and extort the victims of war; boldly, valiantly lead strikes on Imperial superweapons; run Havoc Squad with gruff good humor or rigid discipline; and sacrifice friendships for the greater good. Better known as the trooper player character from the *Star Wars*:

The Old Republic (TOR) videogame, the commander's sex, species, personality, and name are all customizable. Whatever the choice, though, the commander is the absolute best of the best, leading an elite squad to defend the Republic at any cost.

Full disclosure: I worked on TOR, but I didn't write for the trooper, so I figure I'm allowed this one! TOR has a fine selection of soldiers to choose from, really—I could easily have gone with Jace Malcom or Pierce—but no one else represents the elite fighting forces of the old Republic like the CO of Havoc.

5

SABINE WREN



Star Wars Rebels doesn't often dive deep into the background of Sabine Wren. But before

Sabine was a rebel, she was an Imperial cadet, trained in weapons and combat and to be loyal to the Empire. One could argue that makes her an ex-soldier, but she still puts the same military skills and mindset to use fighting her former masters with the *Ghost* crew. At the same time, she totally embraces a degree of freedom, creativity, and anti-authoritarianism at odds with strict regulation and hierarchy.

It's this contradiction that makes Sabine most interesting to me as a soldier. She's the rebellion's own internal struggle in microcosm—a military weapon with the soul of an artist and an idealistic child forced into a violent galaxy. Sure, she's not a traditional infantry soldier... who among the rebels really is?

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THE SHROUD OF THE DARK SIDE

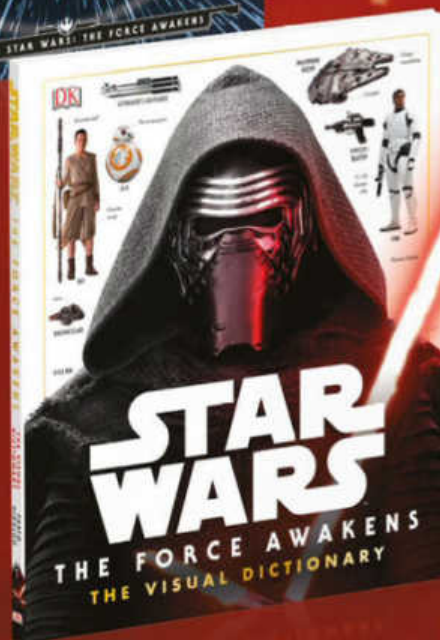
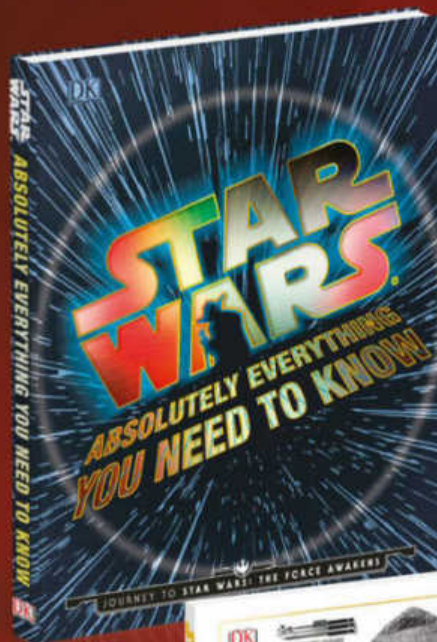
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